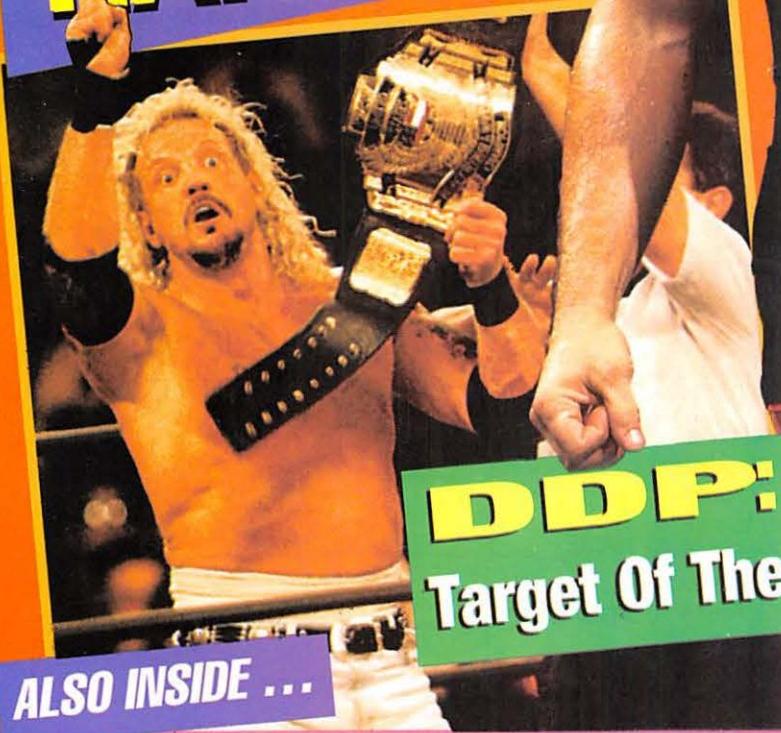


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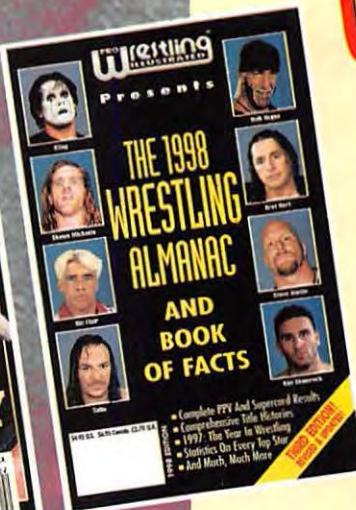
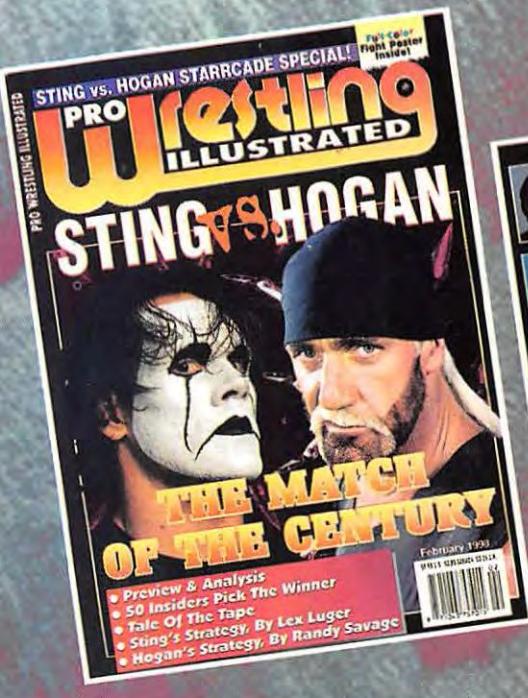
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THE MAGAZINE
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OFF PRO WRESTLING

MAY 1998

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April 14, 1998

Sincerely Yours

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THANK YOU, JIM

I would like to thank Jim Cornette for having the guts to speak his mind about how our great sport has become an embarrassment thanks to promoters who don't know their wrestling.

How much longer do we have to look at freaks like Goldust, DeGeneration X, and Raven's Flock running around making a disgrace of our sport? How many main events have we witnessed with gang-style interference? And I won't even go into what I think of the WWF's dealings with Don King and Mike Tyson.

Jim Cornette is right on the money when he says we need more *wrestling*. At my pay-per-view parties, we always agree that the most exciting matches are fought on the undercards by guys like Chris Benoit, Dean Malenko, and Eddy Guerrero. These serious competitors always impress us with their speed, creative moves,

and the pride they take in their sport.

I suggest that every promoter study tapes of these competitors, as well as those of Jim Cornette's *Midnight Express*. This way, the promoters could get a clue about how this sport's most loyal fans react to quality wrestling.

STEVE NARDI
West Berlin, NJ

OWEN FAN

Now that the Bret Hart controversy has settled down, I find it interesting that the one who has really risen like an angel from this pile of crud is Owen Hart. The best gift brother Bret ever gave him was leaving the WWF. Now, while Bret is feeling out his new home, Owen has been catapulted into the WWF's brightest spotlight as the lone Hart who stuck around. Owen's finally getting to show the world that he is just as talented as his brother.

I have always thought Owen was just as good as Bret, but he always had to do something to distinguish himself as his own man when Bret ruled the WWF roost. Owen tried wrestling with a mask, wrestling in Japan, and openly defying him.

I was happy to see Owen and Bret reunite last year. Now, since his brother and those feelings of being overlooked are gone, maybe he can finally attain the superstar status he deserves.

KATHI LAMOND
Gadsden, AL

BAM BAM BOO-GELOW

Bam Bam Bigelow should save his breath and stick to what he does best—eating pizza ("Bam Bam Bigelow's Message To ECW Fans: 'I Won't Sell Out!'" March 1998). There are several good reasons why ECW fans don't cheer for him ... and probably never will.

Harry Burkett accurately said that ECW fans will cheer any wrestler who puts out a hardcore



Jim Cornette is very serious about bringing more old-time wrestling back to the WWF. Reader Steve Nardi supports what he is doing 100 percent.

effort every night. Yep, we cheer the best of the good guys and the most despicable of the bad guys. But Bigelow is neither. He is a sneak, and his actions since he's been in ECW have hardly been applaudable.

First, he aligned himself with Rick Rude, who we all know is the undisputed king of sellouts. Rude is a maggot who goes wherever the money is.

Next, he turned against Shane Douglas, ECW's hardest-working champion ever. Bigelow destroyed The Triple Threat by putting his own selfish goals ahead of those of the alliance.

After that, he body-slammed Francine and broke her pelvis. Bigelow outweighs her by at least 250 pounds. ECW is extreme, but nobody wants to see a physically mismatched woman brutalized by a big goof like Bam Bam Bigelow.



Bigelow isn't doing any favors to ECW fans by pledging to stick around. As far as I'm concerned, he can join his buddy Rude in the WWF. Or is it WCW? Or is it New Japan? Or is it Music City Wrestling? Or is it ...

LAWRENCE LAVA
Union City, PA

DISCO DUNCE?

Disco Inferno has absolutely no right to be upset with J.J. Dillon for making him defend his title against Perry Saturn after he was mugged by Harlem Heat ("Abused, Burned, & Stripped: The Worst Night Of Disco Inferno's Life," March 1998).

Disco Inferno wrestled Jacquelyn for all the wrong reasons. He should have been preparing for Saturn instead of trying to save face against Jacquelyn. After all, the match wasn't even on television. Most of his fans couldn't see him avenge his loss. His immature gloating at the end of a match that he should have won warranted the beating Harlem Heat gave him. Insisting on that match

(Continued on page 52)



Disco Inferno tries to maneuver his way out of the clutches of Jacquelyn, who pinned him at Halloween Havoc '97. Reader William Morrison thinks it was foolish of Disco to ask for a rematch.

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REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

By Stu Saks

Right at this very moment, as my fingers hit the keyboard, WCW is handily winning its war with the NWO. By the time you read this, I'd be willing to bet that the opposite is true.

Anybody who knows how I feel about this sport knows which side I am rooting for in this protracted battle. Anybody with even a degree of common sense knows that if WCW is to survive as an entity, WCW must ultimately ward off this internal revolution. But I have to admit: I don't want WCW to win too quickly. This whole affair has simply been too much fun to want to see it end.

For a while, toward the end of 1996, it looked as if the NWO was going to mop up WCW. With rookie marvel The Giant and the omnipotent Eric Bischoff jumping to the NWO's side, the group had made a quantum leap beyond mere supergroup status. Its international presence was also felt, as a Japanese version of the NWO, led by Masa Chono, took power in New Japan.

But then the pendulum swung back in the opposite direction, as The Giant had a violent falling-out with the group, and Bischoff's power was severely reduced by the supreme order of TBS Sports President Dr. Harvey Schiller (who gets his orders from you-know-who). Soon, though, the NWO discovered that WCW was largely comprised of an ununited, rather self-centered bunch who wouldn't lift a finger to help one of its own. The men in black took full advantage, and the pendulum had once again swung.

As we moved through 1997, it seemed that the only hope for WCW was Sting, who was, if nothing else, well-rested. WCW waited and hoped that Sting's showing against Hulk Hogan at Starrcade would once again nudge the pendulum in the opposite direction. Sure enough, Sting beat Hogan for the WCW World title. The questionable manner of victory might not have been satisfying to those who were looking for the match to end with an exclamation point, but it did accomplish something rather extraordinary: It energized the WCW faction and seemed to shoot it with doses of unity and courage.

Though the pendulum has indeed swung again, we should all be cautioned to not get carried away with WCW's victory celebrations and the NWO's apparent internal discord. This war is just heating up. And, like I said, the next chapter will probably have been written before you read this one. Keep an eye on that pendulum.

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NAMES MA

THE VERY DAINTY Elizabeth, the ex-wife and current valet of "Macho Man" Randy Savage, should be called "Macho Lady" from now on. Yes, Elizabeth, the woman who used to cry when threatened by a wrestler, is now interfering in matches. During a recent *Monday Nitro*, Savage held Lex Luger as Elizabeth reared back and slapped him as hard as she could. "There are lots of WCW wrestlers who try to intimidate me. When I hit Lex Luger, I sent out a message to the entire world that no one should ever mess with me again," Elizabeth told me. "The NWO changed my life forever, and for the better!"



ELIZABETH

Owen Hart tells me that Shawn Michaels, Hunter Hearst Helmsley, and Chyna once approached him about joining DeGeneration X and offered him a large sum of money. "I'd rather die a slow and painful death than accept that offer!" Hart exclaimed. "I admit that I've done some low-down things in my life that I look back at and hang my head in



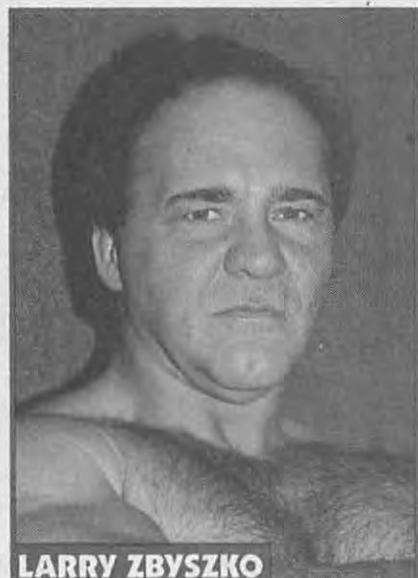
shame about. But to become a member of DeGeneration X, hell, that would be the worst thing I could ever do. I'm not flattered that they asked me to join. I'm disgusted that they think I'm on the same low level they are!"

Marty Jannetty, best known as Shawn Michaels' partner in **The Rockers**, is now in WCW, where he is using the superkick as his finishing move. "We both used it years ago, and just because Shawn made it famous doesn't mean I can't use it, too. It's not his move—it's ours!"

Shawn's reaction to this? "Who cares?"

Former AWA World champion **Rick Martel** is seeking a shot at the WCW U.S. title, which is currently held by "Diamond" Dallas Page. "I'd be honored," Page said. "The guy is a legend, and my job is to destroy legends. Just look at what I did to Randy Savage and Curt Hennig. Step right up, Mr. Martel, your big bang comes up next!... It's Mr. Ooh La La wearing the Pennsylvania Championship Wrestling Americas

belt after his victory over Lance Diamond... **Larry Zbyszko** says he doesn't want to stop battling members of the NWO. "Hey, wouldn't it be humiliating to ol' 'Hollywood' Hogan to get in the ring against me, and have a guy who ended the career of **Bruno Sammartino** end his as well? I would love that opportunity!"



LARRY ZBYSZKO

Jimmy Cicero is the new Southern Championship Wrestling champion after a win over **Chris Stephenson**... **Dic Grimes** has been unmasked in APW. He turned out to be former APW referee **Vinny Massaro**... **John Rock**, a former friend and tag team partner of **Glen Osbourne**, has signed for several matches in Pennsylvania Championship Wrestling. Rock has stated that he and Glen are no longer friends, and he has "high hopes of ending Osbourne's career"... **Johnny Ace** is negotiating with the WWF. Ace spends most of his time wrestling for All-Japan Pro Wrestling... **Ricky Santana** is now competing in All-Japan rings.

KIN' NEWS

By Bill Apter



VAMPIRE WARRIOR

There was an interesting series of matches between the Grande Wrestling Alliance and Regional Championship Wrestling recently. The two promotions agreed that whichever side lost the most matches would shut down. Turns out Grande came out on top. In the most important match of the series, RCW heavyweight champion **Danny Rose** lost to GWA champion **Bob Steele**, who used brass knuckles to gain the win. After the match ended, Steele announced that his new manager is a man named **R.C.**—the former commissioner of RCW!

Vampire Warrior, the husband of **Luna Vachon**, is wrestling in the WWF under his real name, **David Heath**. Although he's considered more than a bit weird himself, Heath said, "When you look at **Goldust**, I'm sorry, but you can't call me weird anymore. I usually don't mind my wife hanging around some of the guys, but Goldust is just too much of a freak even for me. I want her away from him!" Luna said she and Heath

have always agreed their careers would not interfere with their personal lives. "I'm breaking that rule—now!" he insisted ... **The Samoan Kid** and **Kano** have embarked on a reign of terror in Southern California Championship Wrestling. They recently broke the leg of **Dan the Man**, and Kano warned that "the legs of **Jess Hansen**, **Jack Stud**, and **Johnny Webb** are next!"

Chris Jericho says his new "off-the-wall" personality, is the real him. "I was always a little crazy," he told me. "I tried to put on a normal act for the fans for a long time, but now that



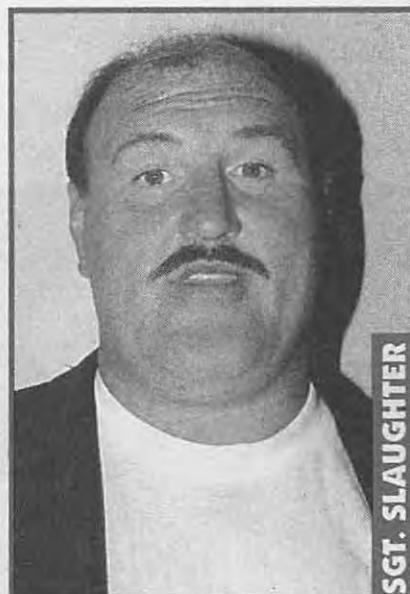
CHRIS JERICHO

I'm being the real me, I feel my career will only go in a positive direction. I was such a wimp before. I get sick whenever I look at old tapes of myself."

Wolfie D has won the Music City Wrestling North American title from **Terry Golden**. Wolfie's old **PG-13** partner, **J.C. Ice**, has returned to wrestling after a hiatus and has a warning for his friend: "I still love

Wolfie like a brother, but that North American gold would look great around my waist."

WWF Commissioner **Sgt. Slaughter** is ready to levee a huge fine against **Chainsaw Charlie**. "



SGT. SLAUGHTER

cannot continue to permit **Chainsaw Charlie**, or **Terry Funk**, whatever you want to call him, to bring that rusty chainsaw of his to the ring," Slaughter said. "I've already spoken to my superiors, **Gorilla Monsoon** and **Vince McMahon**, and we are all in agreement that we do not want the WWF to turn into ECW. We plan on getting that chainsaw out of here permanently." It won't be that easy, Sarge.

"Ever see a chainsaw cut through paper?" asked Funk when he heard the news. "Ever see a chainsaw cut through an ex-Marine's oversized gut or cut off a few extra chins! Nobody tells Chainsaw Charlie he can't play with his toy! It just ain't gonna happen!"

That's all for now. I'll see you at the matches! □

SAY THE NAME "Steiners" and what do you think of? Well, a lot of people think of great wrestling and tag team champions, but when you get right down to the root of the matter, only one thought—one word—should come to mind: brothers. The Steiners are as tight a brother combination as you'll find, not only in wrestling, but in the entire world. They stand by each other through good times and bad, through injuries and losing streaks, and they have never feuded. They have never competed against each other in a one-on-one match.

Until now?

Well, maybe.

Then again, maybe not.

DIBIASE TRYING TO PREVENT STEINERS' SPLIT read the front-page headline of the January

ON THE ROAD

With Dave Lenker



Scott Steiner applies a headlock on Marcus Bagwell as his brother, Rick, waits and waits in the background for a tag. Scott hasn't tagged him much recently, but both say things are okay between them.

26, 1998, edition of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated Weekly*. I wrote the headline and helped research the story, which quoted manager Ted DiBiase as saying, "This thing started out of nowhere. We were supposed to have a meeting one day a few weeks ago, but they wouldn't stop arguing. All they told me was it was a family thing and it was none of my business. But after Rick walked out, Scott mentioned something about how he'd show Rick."

A few incidents built up to the problems. Scott showed up late for a World tag team title defense on *WCW Saturday Night*. Rick won, but then he was beaten up by Scott Norton and Vincent before Scott Steiner showed up and saved the day. A few nights later, Scott never tried to tag his brother in a match against Konnan and Marcus Bagwell. That type of incident was repeated several other times.

Unfortunately, when the story was written, only DiBiase, not Rick or Scott, was available for comment. A few days later, I spoke to both Rick and Scott over the phone, at different times, but neither of them would comment on the situation.

"If you want to talk, come down here," Scott said from Atlanta. "I'll talk face-to-face, but that's all."

Apparently, the Steiners were in agreement on at least one thing, because Rick also said he would only speak face-to-face.

That meant it was time to pile up the frequent flyer miles once again. This column might be called, "On The Road," but very little driving is done by me. Mostly I'm catching one flight or another. This time, it was Delta from Philadelphia to Atlanta, then the usual interminable walk through the endless Atlanta Airport, to the car rental lot, and finally into downtown Atlanta. Destination: CNN Center. Lunch with Scott. Dinner with Rick.

"Okay, whaddya want to know?" Scott asked as he cut into his crab cakes.

"Well, this thing with you and Rick..."

"What about it? There's nothing going on. Everything's fine."

"Well..."

"Well nothing. I showed up late for one match. He got mad. I didn't tag out for a few matches, but we won anyway. Big deal!"

"So there are no problems between you and your brother?"

"None at all. Maybe a few things here and

(Continued on page 54)

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ECW TV 16 Sandman vs. Cactus Jack (3 matches), Raven vs. Dreamer, Melanie vs. Guerrero, Benoit and Melanie vs. Mikey and Norman Smiley, Raven and Richards vs. Dreamer and Mikey.

ECW TV 17 Sandman vs. Cactus (Barbed Wire Match), Sandman vs. Shane Douglas, Beulah vs. Luna Vachon, Public Enemy vs. Pitbulls, and the ECW debut of the Gangstas.

ECW TV 18 Raven and Richards beating Public Enemy for the Tag Titles, Taz vs. 2 Cold Scorpio, Taz and Eddy Guerrero vs. Melanie and Scorpio (twice), Cactus and Dreamer and Pitbulls vs. Raven and Richards and Dudleys. Cactus and Melanie and Scorpio vs. Steiner and Guerrero, Public Enemy vs. Gangstas.

ECW TV 20 Melanie vs. Guerrero (Final ECW Match), Francine vs. Beulah (Cat Fight), Raven and Richards vs. Pitbulls, Steiners vs. Scorpio and Benoit, Raven and Richards vs. Pitbulls (Double Dog Collar Match).

ECW TV 21 Steiner and Taz vs. Eliminators and Scorpio, Steve Austin imitating Hulk Hogan, Rey Misterio Jr. Vs. Psicosis (twice), Public Enemy and Mikey vs. Sandman and Scorpio and New Jack (Cage Match).

ECW TV 22 Public Enemy vs. Gangstas, Taz and Rick Steiners vs. Eliminators. Cactus vs. Dreamer, Misterio Jr. and Konnan vs. LaParka and Psicosis, Sandman vs. Mikey.

ECW TV 23 Cactus and Raven vs. Dreamer and Funk, Heavenly Bodies debut in ECW, Konnan vs. Jason, Mikey vs. Misterio Jr., Steve Austin vs. Mikey (twice), Sabu return to ECW.

ECW TV 24 Steve Austin and Mikey and Sandman (3 way dance), Misterio Jr. Vs. Psicosis (Mexican Death Match), Raven vs. Dreamer, Public Enemy vs. Heavenly Bodies, Shane Douglas returns to ECW.

ECW TV 25 Eliminators vs. 911 and Rey Misterio Jr., Konnan vs. Sandman (Bloodbath), Sabu vs. Steve Richards, Rob Van Dam vs. Axl Rotten, Scorpio vs. Mikey, Sabu vs. Van Dam, Misterio Jr. vs. Juventud Guerrera, Headhunters return, Sandman vs. Raven.

ECW TV 26 Raven and Richards vs. Dreamer and Douglas, Brian Pillman debuts in ECW. Headhunters vs. Bruise Brothers, Raven vs. Douglas (Pillman runs in), Sabu vs. Scorpio, Eliminators and Richards vs. Pitbulls and Francine (Triple Dog Collar Match).

ECW TV 27 Headhunters vs. Gangstas, Cactus vs. Chris Jericho, Misterio Jr. vs. Guerrero (2 matches), Cactus vs. Mikey (Cactus' last ECW match). Gangstas - Eliminators Brawl

ECW TV 28 Raven and Bruise Brothers vs. Dreamer, Douglas and Sandman. Sabu vs. Mikey, Taz vs. Jericho, Pitbulls and Dreamer vs. Bruises and Lee, Dreamer vs. Lee, Raven vs. Douglas.

ECW TV 29 Sabu vs. VanDam, Douglas vs. Scorpio, Taz vs. Scorpio, Jericho vs. Mikey, Jericho vs. Scorpio, Eliminators and Lee vs. Dreamer and Gangstas.

ECW TV 30 Brian Lee and Bruise Brothers vs. Dreamer and Pitbulls, Raven vs. Pitbull 2, VanDam vs. Mikey, Douglas vs. Pitbull 2, Sandman vs. Richards.

ECW TV 31 Jericho vs. Pitbull #2, Dreamer vs. Lee (Weapons Match), Gangstas vs. Eliminators, Sabu vs. VanDam, Eliminators vs. Sabu and Mikey, Jerico vs. Douglas vs. Pitbull #2 vs. Scorpio (4 Way Dance).

ECW TV 32 Sabu vs. Louie Spicoli, Sandman vs. Richards, Eliminators vs. Okano and Yamada, Dreamer vs. Raven from Japan, Shane Douglas vs. Pitbull #2, and a 4-way dance for the Tag Titles.

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ECW TV 37 Gangstas vs. Morton and Rich, Raven vs. Sandman (Texas Death Match), Raven vs. Sandman (Hair vs. Belt), Raven vs. Steve Williams, Funk vs. Brian Lee.

ECW TV 38 Funk vs. Tommy Rich, Sabu and VanDam vs. Eliminators (Tables and Ladders), Dudleys vs. Gangstas, Funk and Dreamer vs. Lee and Raven, Lance Storm vs. Balls Mahoney.

ECW TV 39 Taz vs. VanDam, Funk vs. Brian Lee, Balls vs. Sandman (Twice), Funk vs. Axl Rotten, Sabu vs. Spike Dudley, Raven and Shane vs. Dreamer and Funk, Great Sasuke and Hamada and nanina vs. Taka and Men's Tech and Dick Togo (Michinoku Pro G-Man).

ECW TV 40 Preview of "Barely Legal", Eliminators vs. Dudleys vs. Gangstas (3 Way Dance), Video clips of "Barely Legal", Rob Van Dam vs. Pitbull #2, and the Evolution of Mr. Monday Night.

ECW TV 41 Gangstas vs. Dudleys vs. Eliminators (3 Way Dance), Bam Bam Bigelows return to ECW, Rude's debut as TV commentator, Sabu and Van Dam vs. Taz and Candito, Dreamer vs. Spicoli, Sandman vs. Balls, Raven and Richards vs. Funk and Dreamer.

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Behind the Dressing Room Door

by Dave Rosenbaum

ALOT OF wrestling fans are shocked by Goldust's recent behavior. The Artist Formerly Known As Goldust, as he now likes to be called, has developed dressing habits even stranger than they were before, and they were pretty strange before. But I'm not surprised by The Artist Formerly Known As Goldust (henceforth known in this column by the acronym TAFKAG). Not in the least.

You see, I live 40 miles north of Miami's South Beach.

You want strange? I'll give you strange. On South Beach, cross-dressers rollerblade down the middle of streets and in the middle of traffic, and it doesn't even have to be New Year's Eve! On South Beach, people are never who they say they are, and nobody even looks like what he or she is. Men are women, women are men, and although they tend to mix, they don't tend to mix together. This is an area in which models are considered normal.

You know models. Those stick figures who find time to eat about once a month.

In this setting, TAFKAG would be considered abnormal. In other words, he wouldn't be strange enough to fit in. He'd stick out. On South Beach, weird behavior is so commonplace that the weirdos blend in and the normal people stand out.

In fact, I hear the next fashion craze on South Beach will be blue jeans and T-shirts. They're going to try to force the rest of us into cross-dressing.

Well, it isn't going to work. I don't have a single dress in my closet, and I don't plan on buying one.

As for TAFKAG, he has diapers in his closet. Obviously he must, because a few days after New Year's, he came out at *Raw* wearing a diaper. The idea, according

to TAFKAG, was that he was the new year. You know, the New Year's baby.

Goldust in a diaper. Hold that thought for a moment. Then get rid of it. That's not the kind of thought you want to hang on to for long.

Man, I thought Dusty Rhodes in wrestling trunks was a scary sight. TAFKAG in diapers? Forget about it!

At another *Raw* he came out for a match against Flash Funk—for those who spend their Monday nights watching *Nitro*, Flash Funk is an African-American—done up in black face and wig and carrying a boom box. It looked like something Col. DeBeers, the renowned wrestling racist, would have done. Coming from Goldust, it was weird. And offensive. Flash Funk couldn't believe it. We got about 100 calls at our office the next day.

"Did you see what Goldust did?"

"That man owes every African-American an apology."

And the harshest criticism: "Give Goldust a Thumbs Down!"

Yes, it was pretty tasteless. But at South Beach, nobody would have blinked an eye. On South Beach, what Goldust did would have been admirably labeled "cross-race dressing."

There's more. TAFKAG is full of surprises and outlandish costumes. At a mid-January *Raw*, Marc Mero announced the arrival of Sable. Music played. A blonde woman came out wearing a thong and with coconuts stuffed into her bikini top.

Of course, that was no woman.

That was TAFKAG!

This whole thing with TAFKAG and disguises—

(Continued on page 55)



WWF fans might be shocked by the strange exploits of The Artist Formerly Known As Goldust, or TAFKAG, but he wouldn't be considered particularly outrageous if he stopped by Miami's South Beach, according to Dave Rosenbaum.

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the Insider

by Brandi Mankiewicz

(The opinions expressed in this column are those of Brandi Mankiewicz alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of anyone else on the staff of this magazine.)

WHAT IS MOST surprising to me is that this didn't happen sooner. The minute the New World Order was born, I heard people making bets about how long it would survive. After all, all these men with large egos to go along with their large bodies certainly could not peacefully co-exist through the long haul, could they? For more than one

year, despite some key personnel changes and internal conflicts, the group remained amazingly unified.

Not anymore.

What used to be rumored dissension has now become televised dissension. The NWO once again seems to be splitting into factions, and the leaders can't seem to smooth the choppy waters. Randy Savage is mad at Kevin Nash. Kevin Nash is mad at Randy Savage. Hulk Hogan is mad at both. Scott Hall hangs out with Savage, but teams with Nash. While this soap opera unfolds, the WCW wrestlers sit back and anticipate the final meltdown. Yes,

WCW relishes the turmoil that has plagued the NWO, but do they really want a meltdown to happen?

The question may sound stupid, but let's look at this issue a little more closely. WCW as a whole must ask itself a question similar to one that politicians often ask their constituents during election time.

Is WCW better off now than it was 18 months ago?

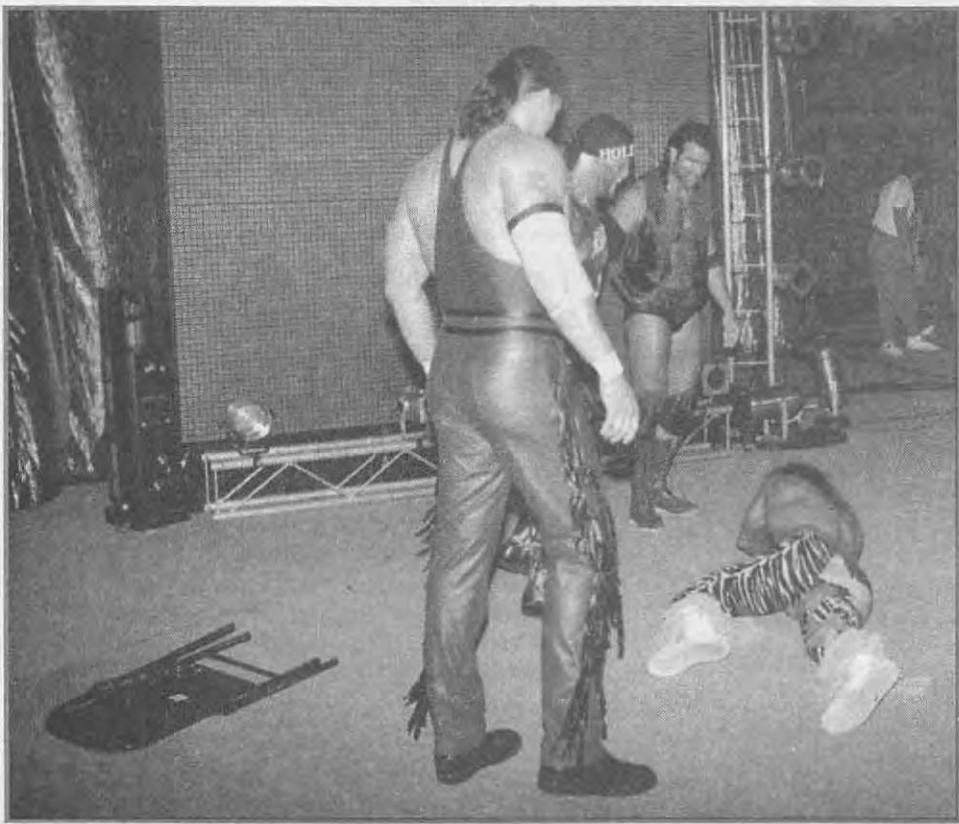
Let's see. In the spring of 1996, *Nitro*—WCW's flagship show—was still running second behind the WWF's *Raw*. Pay-per-view buy rates were not all that impressive. Fans were hardly filling up arenas around the country. Even though it had acquired some big-name talent, the federation lacked direction.

The signings of Hall and Nash were looked upon as coups, but many questioned the astronomical sums that these men were being paid. Where would they fit in? And would they be able to replicate their WWF success?

Let's face it: Things definitely improved when Hulk Hogan told his fan base and WCW to "stick it" on July 7, 1996. All of a sudden, Hogan was not a stale, outdated character. He was new and improved. At first, WCW brass were indignant over the newfound attitude of their most recognizable wrestler. Then the ratings started to climb and they softened their stance. Wrestling fans, both rabid and casual, were lining up to see the new Hogan and his new organization, the NWO. A lot of fans simply abandoned that other wrestling show on the USA Network.

Not much has changed since that time. The NWO presence still means blockbuster ratings. Skeptics would point to the NWO *Nitro* debacle a week before Starrcade (a

(Continued on page 56)



The NWO's founding fathers, Nash, Hogan, and Hall, stand over Randy Savage. Suddenly the NWO's future is starting to look bleak, and I'm not happy about it. WCW shouldn't be, either.

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ON

Assignment

By Liz Hunter

SOMETIMES MY answering machine is more trouble than it's worth.

I was away from home for three weeks this winter, both on business travel and a brief vacation. Those closest to me knew I'd be away. That's why I was shocked to see 15 messages on my answering machine when I returned. Was Lenker sending me off on another sojourn? Was Brandi calling to assert her perceived advantage in womanhood? Was it salespeople, to whom, of course, I would give hours of my valuable time?

Well, I thought, no better way to find out than to just play the messages.

With pen in hand, ready to jot down the numerous calls, I pressed the "play" button. To my surprise, all 15 messages were from one person. Not a co-worker. Not a relative. Not a salesperson. Who, do you ask, would call me 15 times? None other than The Honky Tonk Man. This was just a sample of what HTM left on my machine:

"Liz. Honky here. Just wanted to let you know that you may be seeing more of me in the future on your TV. Can't say much now. Just suffice to say that the greatest Intercontinental champion

of all-time is coming back in a big way."

"Liz. Honk again. Getting closer, baby. Soon The Honky Tonk Man—the greatest Intercontinental champion of all-time—will be back under the bright spotlights. And I ain't talking about managing no protege. This is the real deal."

"Liz. HTM. Wanted to give you

the scoop since I know how much you love The Honky Tonk Man—the greatest Intercontinental champion of all-time. I have returned to the WWF to be the greatest singer, the greatest dancer, and the greatest wrestler. I'm going into that Royal Rumble to get what I deserve: a shot at the world's best at WrestleMania XIV."

"Liz. Honky. Just got to the building, baby. The world is going to be shocked. Once again, The Honky Tonk Man—the greatest Intercontinental champion of all-time—is going to set the world on its ear..I am back and back with a vengeance."

"Liz, Honk. About to go out. They're cuing up that rock 'n' roll for The Honky Tonk Man—the greatest Intercontinental champion of all-time—to explode into that arena. All those so-called superstars will be shakin' in their boots when they see my shake, rattle, and roll."

"Liz. HTM. Did you see it? Did you see the crowd go nuts for me? Did you see those wrestlers tremble with fear in the presence of The Honky Tonk Man, the greatest Intercontinental champion of all-time? I'm telling you, the fire is back. Elvis may have left the

(Continued on page 57)

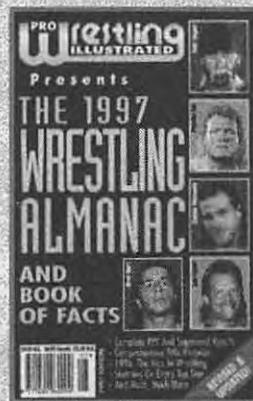


The self-proclaimed (15 times, according to Liz Hunter) "greatest Intercontinental champion of all-time," The Honky Tonk Man, says he wants the WWF World heavyweight belt this time around.

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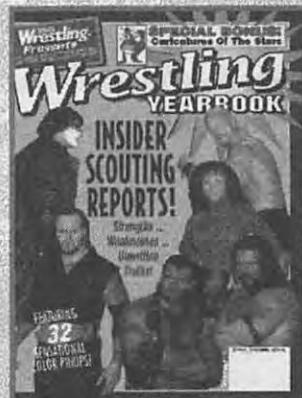
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INSIDE WRESTLING

CAPSULE PROFILE

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ROB VAN DAM

ROB VAN DAM has seen the inside of so many airplanes he could become a pilot if he ever gave up wrestling. Few grapplers have logged the miles Van Dam has at this point of his young career ... Native of Battle Creek, Michigan, did a lot of kickboxing in high school ... Van Dam beat Dango Nguyen in his professional debut in Toledo, Ohio, in 1990 ... Wrestled in Michigan, West Virginia, Indiana, and Pennsylvania during his first months as a professional ... Then headed south and wrestled in Georgia and Florida ... WCW picked him up in late-1992 ("Hey, everybody wanted a piece of me") ... After a forgettable stint there, he went to Asia in 1993 and wrestled for All-Japan ... Then went on tour in the U.S., hopping from the Carolinas to Georgia to Florida to California to Nevada, before heading back to Japan again ... Made his ECW debut on January 5, 1996, in Philadelphia and pinned Axl Rotten ... Broke Sabu's finger in a feud that dates back to when the two battled each other in various independent promotions ("ECW promoters never wanted us to wrestle each other again") ...

Shocked a lot of people by defeating Sabu in a respect match a few months later, but he refused to shake Sabu's hand afterward ... The two eventually did become tag team partners, however ... The two had some great matches with The Eliminators ... Calling himself "Mr. Monday Night," Van Dam appeared on the WWF's Raw Is

broadcast last summer, fueling speculation that he was headed back to WCW ("Just looking at my options") ... Earned a suspension from ECW for working in the WWF without permission ... Has appeared in two movies: *Super Fights* and *Blood Moon* ("ECW wants me, the WWF wants me, WCW wants me, Hollywood wants me") ... He is

very critical of ECW, although he continues to wrestle regularly for the promotion ... In recent months,

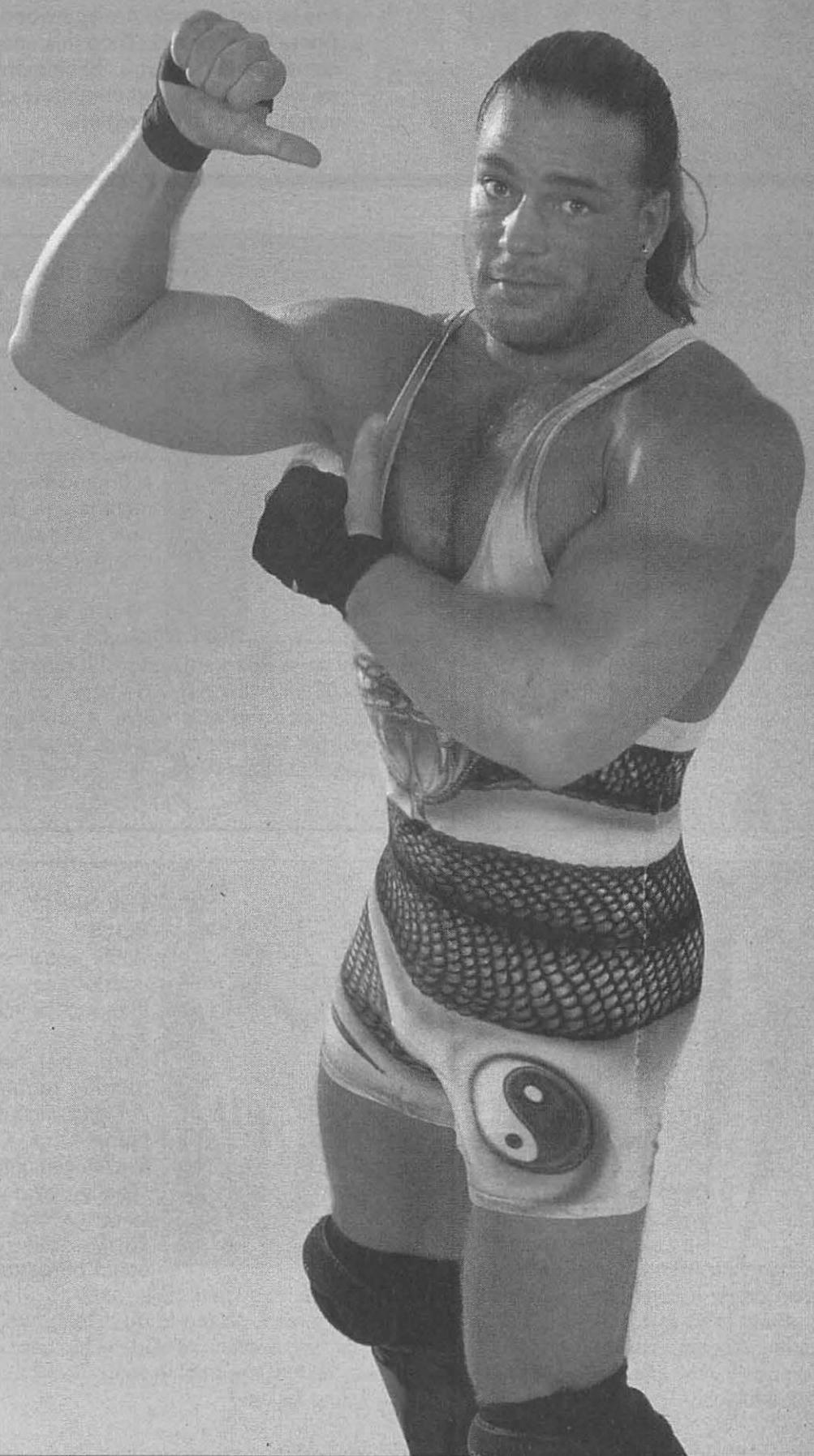
Van Dam has feuded mainly with Tommy Dreamer and Taz, whose strong mat skills are an interesting foil to Van Dam's high-flying aerial assault ... At 6', 227 pounds, Van Dam is also very acrobatic ("I'm used to being in the air") ... The split-legged moonsault, his favorite maneuver, has been an effective weapon for him in ECW, an organization that features more brawlers than scientific wrestlers ("I perfected the move; accept no imitations") ... Credits manager Bill Alfonso with providing him with leadership and guidance in the treacherous ECW ...



Rob Van Dam connects with spinning kick to the chest of Bobby Duncum Jr. "Mr. Monday Night" has used his martial arts skills to become one of ECW's top stars. But he isn't too popular in that federation.

War on May 12 and cultivated a relationship with Jerry "The King" Lawler, one of ECW's staunchest critics ... Said he had become too big a star for ECW ... Was spotted talking to the NWO's Vincent at a Nitro

Currently in an intense feud with Bam Bam Bigelow, but nobody knows for sure how long Van Dam will remain in ECW ("I got promoters calling me every day; you just never know where 'Mr. Monday Night' will appear"). □



ROB VAN DAM

Where Are They NOW?

Do you have a favorite wrestler who has left your area? Are you wondering where he is today? Then this special column is just for you. Each month we will update the whereabouts of four current or former wrestlers



BOB HOLLY

The former WWF World tag team champion is currently living in his hometown of Mobile, Alabama, where he is still involved in auto racing and works in the construction business. He has appeared on some independent cards in the area recently,

but he doesn't plan on returning to the WWF. "If you're in the WWF you have to devote yourself full-time to them," he says. "It's definitely a great organization, but now I want to pursue my other two interests."



MARK CURTIS

Curtis, who has been a referee for the NWA, USWA, Smoky Mountain, and most recently WCW, was diagnosed with stomach cancer several months ago. He is now undergoing chemotherapy to stop its spread. "The fans and the people involved in

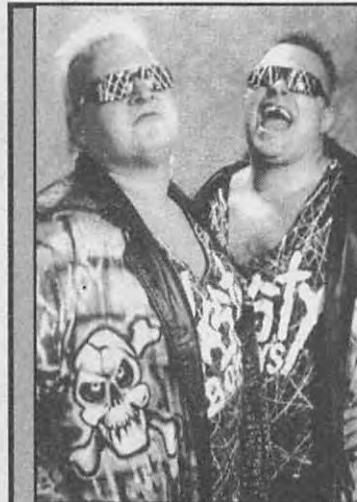
the sport have been so wonderful during this very difficult time," he says. He hopes to return to the sport as soon as possible. If you want to send your get-well wishes to Mark, please send them in care of INSIDE WRESTLING.



SHEIK ADNAN AL-KAISSE

Having made his mark as a competitor and a manager, Al-Kaissie claims to be as savvy as ever. "I am busy training my newest sensation, Sheik Ali, for a world tour," he told us from his suburban Minneapolis home. "We spend hours a day in the

gym and appear on many independent shows. Soon he will be unleashed into the WWF or WCW." When he's not concentrating on the sport, Al-Kaissie, who lives with his wife, Kathy, finds relaxation in the ceramic arts.

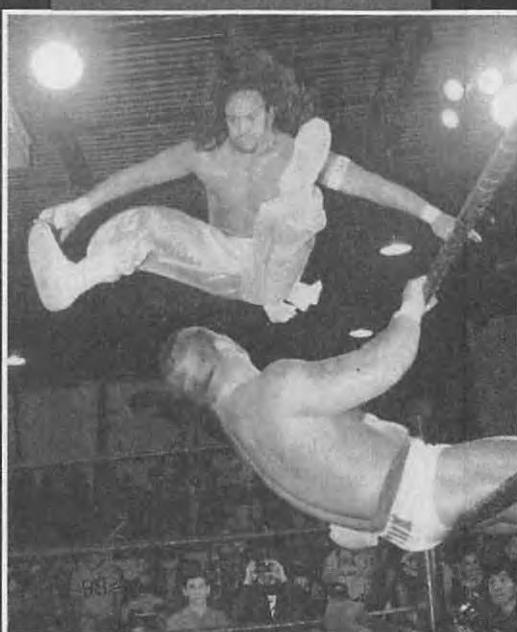


THE NASTY BOYS

While Jerry Sags is still recovering from a neck injury, Brian Knobs reports that he is training regularly in Florida and may come back as a singles competitor. "That's one possibility," he said. "Or Jerry and me could introduce a

new Nasty partner, until he's ready to wrestle again. I've already talked to Tex Cobb, the big movie star, and a bunch of big-time football players. They're told me they're ready to fill Sags' spot anytime we call."

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VADER
VS.
GOLDUST



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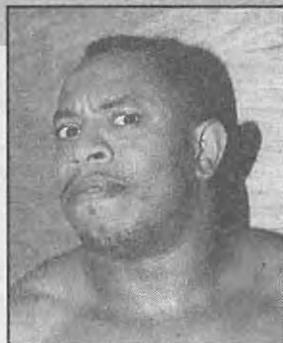
RIKI CHOSHU
VS.
JUSHIN LIGER



PHILADELPHIA, PA
BY FRANK KREWDA



TAZ
VS.
2 COLD SCORPIO



Vader may not have known which crazy getup Goldust was going to wear, but he still knew how to defeat him. Goldust taunted Vader on the house microphone from outside the ring, but that may have added to the pounding that he was about to receive. The action went back and forth for several minutes before Vader clotheslined Goldust and sent him out of the ring, where Luna consoled him. Later, Luna tried to interfere, but she was knocked off the ring apron by Vader. Just minutes later, Vader pinned his archrival.

OTHER BOUTS: WWF light heavyweight champion Taka Michinoku beat Brian Christopher ... Ken Shamrock defeated Faarooq ... Tom Brandi beat Marc Mero ... Shawn Michaels & The New Age Outlaws beat The Undertaker & The Road Warriors ... Kane beat Chainz ... Steve Austin & Cactus Jack defeated Rocky Maivia & D-Lo Brown ... The Headbangers defeated Henry & Phineas Godwinn in a country whipping match.

Choshu ended his 25-year career by beating Liger in his final match at the Eggdome. Liger gained the advantage early, weakening Choshu with a Northern Lights bomb, then a superplex for a near-fall. Later, Choshu recovered long enough to nail Liger with a plancha. Finally, after only five minutes of action, Choshu nailed Liger with two straight lariats to gain his final win.

OTHER BOUTS: Kendo Ka Shin beat Koji Kanemoto ... IWGP junior heavyweight champ Shinjiro Otani pinned Ultimo Dragon ... Yuji Nagata beat Hiroyoshi Tenzen ... Tatsumi Fujinami & Osamu Nishimura beat Satoshi Kojima & Manabu Nakanishi ... Riki Choshu pinned Kazuyuki Fujita ... Choshu pinned Yutaka Yoshie ... Choshu pinned Tatsuhiro Takaiwa ... Takashi Iizuka beat Choshu ... Don Frye beat Naoya Ogawa ... Shinya Hashimoto beat Dennis Lane ... Masahiro Chono pinned Shiro Koshinaka ... IWGP champ Kensuke Sasaki pinned Keiji Muto.

TV champ Taz was mildly surprised to see Scorpio returning to ECW under his old name, but he was still able to down 2 Cold in an intense match. The two men matched each other move for move, using a bevy of suplexes and submission holds. After coming close to pinning Taz, Scorpio missed with an attempted clothesline and was locked in the "Taz-mission" until he submitted. Afterward, Taz saved Scorpio from an attack by Brakus.

OTHER BOUTS: Tommy Dreamer, Axl Rotten, & B. Mahoney defeated Tracey Smothers, Little Guido, & Tommy Rich ... Jerry Lynn defeated Chris Candido by submission ... Gran Hamada defeated Gran Naniwa ... Justin Credible beat The Great Sasuke ... Al Snow pinned Roadkill ... Rob Van Dam beat Bam Bam Bigelow ... Buh Buh Ray, "Big" Dick, & D-Von Dudley defeated New Jack, John Kronus, & Spike Dudley ... The Sandman beat Sabu in a "Stairway To Hell" match.

WRESTLING CAPITALS

DAYTONA BEACH, FL
BY JERRY BENJAMIN



DALLAS PAGE
VS.
KEVIN NASH



BLACKWOOD, NJ
BY TIMOTHY A. WALKER



ROB VAN DAM
VS.
THE SANDMAN



NEW YORK, NY
BY FRANK VITUCCI



TAKA MICHINOKU
VS.
BRIAN CHRISTOPHER



Nash had the advantage over the WCW U.S. champ for most of the match, but his NWO allies ended up storming the ring and costing him whatever chance he had to win the belt. Nash concentrated on DDP's ribs with kicks and punches. Despite several pin attempts, though, Nash couldn't get the win. Finally, Nash whipped Page into a corner, but DDP came back and was about to use a "Diamond cutter" when Hulk Hogan ran into the ring and nailed DDP in the chest. Nash was thus disqualified.

OTHER BOUTS: Randy Savage defeated Chris Adams by disqualification ... Rick Martel beat Louie Spicoli ... Hiroyoshi Tenzan pinned Michiyoshi Ohara ... Ric Flair beat Chris Jericho ... The Giant pinned Meng ... Bill Goldberg pinned Steve McMichael ... Rick & Scott Steiner beat Marcus "Buff" Bagwell & Konnan ... Ray Taylor beat Scott Hall ... Juventud Guerrera beat Ultimo Dragon to win the WCW cruiserweight title ... Lex Luger beat Scott Norton by submission.

As expected, this match turned into a total brawl very early, with the two men fighting both inside and outside the ring. Van Dam grabbed the upper hand by nailing Sandman with a series of savate kicks to the chest, but Sandman came back and whipped Van Dam hard into the steel security railing surrounding the ring. Later, Sandman threw a ladder into the ring and battered Van Dam with it until Sabu interfered and smashed Sandman in the head with a chair. Eventually, Sandman piledriven Van Dam on a chair and got the win.

OTHER BOUTS: The Great Sasuke pinned Tiger Mask ... Paul Diamond defeated Adam Flash ... Doug Furnas & Phil Lafon beat Jerry Lynn & Chris Chetti ... Al Snow pinned Lance Storm ... B. Mahoney, Axl Rotten, & Tommy Dreamer defeated Little Guido, Tracey Smothers, & Tommy Rich ... ECW TV champ Taz wrestled Sabu to a draw ... Buh Buh Ray & D-Von Dudley defeated New Jack & Spike Dudley.

Once again Michinoku, the WWF light heavyweight champion, found a way to frustrate the cocky and talented Christopher. Christopher did have Taka in trouble early in the match, but the champion began countering his every move. After connecting with a spinning kick, Taka clotheslined Christopher out of the ring, where Taka nailed him with a beautiful moonsault. Later, Christopher got several near-falls, but Taka finished him off with a "Michinoku driver" and pinned him.

OTHER BOUTS: Henry & Phineas Godwinn beat The Headbangers in a country whipping match ... Tom Brandi beat Marc Mero by disqualification ... Ken Shamrock beat Faarooq ... The Undertaker & The Road Warriors beat Shawn Michaels & The New Age Outlaws in a cage match ... Big Van Vader defeated Goldust ... Kane beat Chainz ... Cactus Jack & Steve Austin beat Rocky Maivia & D-Lo Brown in a falls-count-anywhere match.



Matt Brock's Plain Speaking

Harder than nails, veteran wrestling reporter Matt Brock has logged more miles covering wrestling than any other journalist. Every month Matt will travel to the sport's hotbeds, reporting everything he sees without fear or favor

Plain

NEW YORK, NY

Once again, the good people at the WWF are desperate for ways to attract attention and take some of the momentum, or whatever it is, away from WCW. This one looks like it could backfire in a big way. Mike Tyson isn't welcome in a boxing ring, at least not in a Nevada boxing ring, after he tried to bite off Evander Holyfield's ear, but he's welcome in a wrestling ring, at least a WWF wrestling ring at WrestleMania XIV. Don't know what this says about the state of wrestling, but I do know what this says about the WWF and Tyson. We've known for a long time, maybe 20 years or so, that McMahon Jr. doesn't know

where to draw the line, and there's more and more proof every day. Goldust comes out in all kinds of outrageous outfits in an obvious attempt to draw attention to himself. Steve Austin drives trucks to ringside. The Undertaker pops out of any casket he can find. Mike Tyson is invited to appear at WrestleMania XIV. The problem with the WWF is that it's doing anything it can to draw attention away from its deleted talent roster by coming up with one bizarre sideshow after another. If the WWF took an accounting of itself, it would come to the conclusion that its biggest problem was losing just about every major star to WCW, and now it can add Bret Hart to the heap. When does the humiliation end? Anyone who foresaw this happening five years ago, or even three years ago, had to have been a genius, but I don't think there's anybody out there like that. But there's some encouraging news. The NWO might be helping the WWF. There have been signs of dissension within the group, and according to Matt Brock, if the NWO goes down, WCW goes down with it. That's a guarantee.



GOLDUST

Spent the holidays at a good friend's house near here and had the rare opportunity to watch television: Couldn't believe what I was seeing. Some newfangled TV station called Comedy Central was airing a program that had to do with the old Andy Kaufman vs. Jerry Lawler

feud, which had been out of my mind for at least a decade. For those who weren't around, Kaufman was a goofball comedian who decided to challenge female wrestlers, which got the attention of Lawler. Before you knew it, Lawler and Kaufman were feuding, then Jimmy Hart decided to manage Kaufman, and after a while, the eyes and ears of just about everyone in wrestling—and a lot of people who had never watched wrestling before—were on the Mid-South Coliseum for the Lawler-Kaufman matches. Lawler and Kaufman even talked about it on the big TV talk shows, like David Letterman's. Kaufman really riled up those fans in Memphis, who hated him with a passion and loved Lawler, their hometown hero, and Lawler tossed him around like a ragdoll, even seriously injured Kaufman's neck. Kaufman died a couple years later, long before his time. Lawler doesn't like to talk about that feud anymore, and for good reason. Wrestlers vs. comedians

doesn't exactly shine the sport in a positive light, and back then Lawler felt he was doing nothing more than his duty. But you have to wonder: Can something like that ever happen again in this day and age? Maybe, but probably not. And if it did, it would happen in ECW.

I'm not a Hulk Hogan apologist, but just to give you an idea of how long Hogan's stayed on top of the game, consider this: On April 7, 1986—that's 1986—Hogan retained the WWF World title by beating King Kong Bundy in a cage match at WrestleMania II. What that basically means is that Bundy and Hogan were both on top of their games back in 1986, and although Hogan's not the champion as of this writing, he's certainly near or at the top of his game right now, in 1998, and nobody can deny that. It's obvious. And where's Bundy? The other night, he wrestled somebody named Mark Mest on a Championship Pro Wrestling

card here at the Cadillac Club. That's what I always liked about Bundy. He never got on ego trips. Hogan needs close to 20,000 fans at the MCI Center to feel secure about himself. Bundy doesn't need anybody. He wrestles because it's his *life*, not a vehicle to Hollywood or anyplace else. Tried to talk to Bundy about this very fact, but he didn't feel like talking. Could understand that. He's proven how tough he is. Now he's living his own life and not having to put up with bigwigs holding his hand. Now that's a real man.

And on a final note, New Japan's Antonio Inoki and Riki Choshu announced their retirements within days of each other. Asked Ric Flair what he thought about this and Flair just shook his head and laughed. "Inoki's one of the most unbelievable athletes I've ever seen," is what Flair said. "You know, he beat me a few years ago. Couldn't believe it. He's gotta be in his 50s, at least, and he's

still wrestling near the top of his game. But I understand why he's retiring. He might as well go out while he's still on top." A lot of fans in this country have never seen Inoki and Choshu, which is too bad. They were two of the greats. Not sure it was worth flying to Japan to see them—not sure anything's worth that—but the two of them will take their rightful places in wrestling history. □

PHILADELPHIA, PA

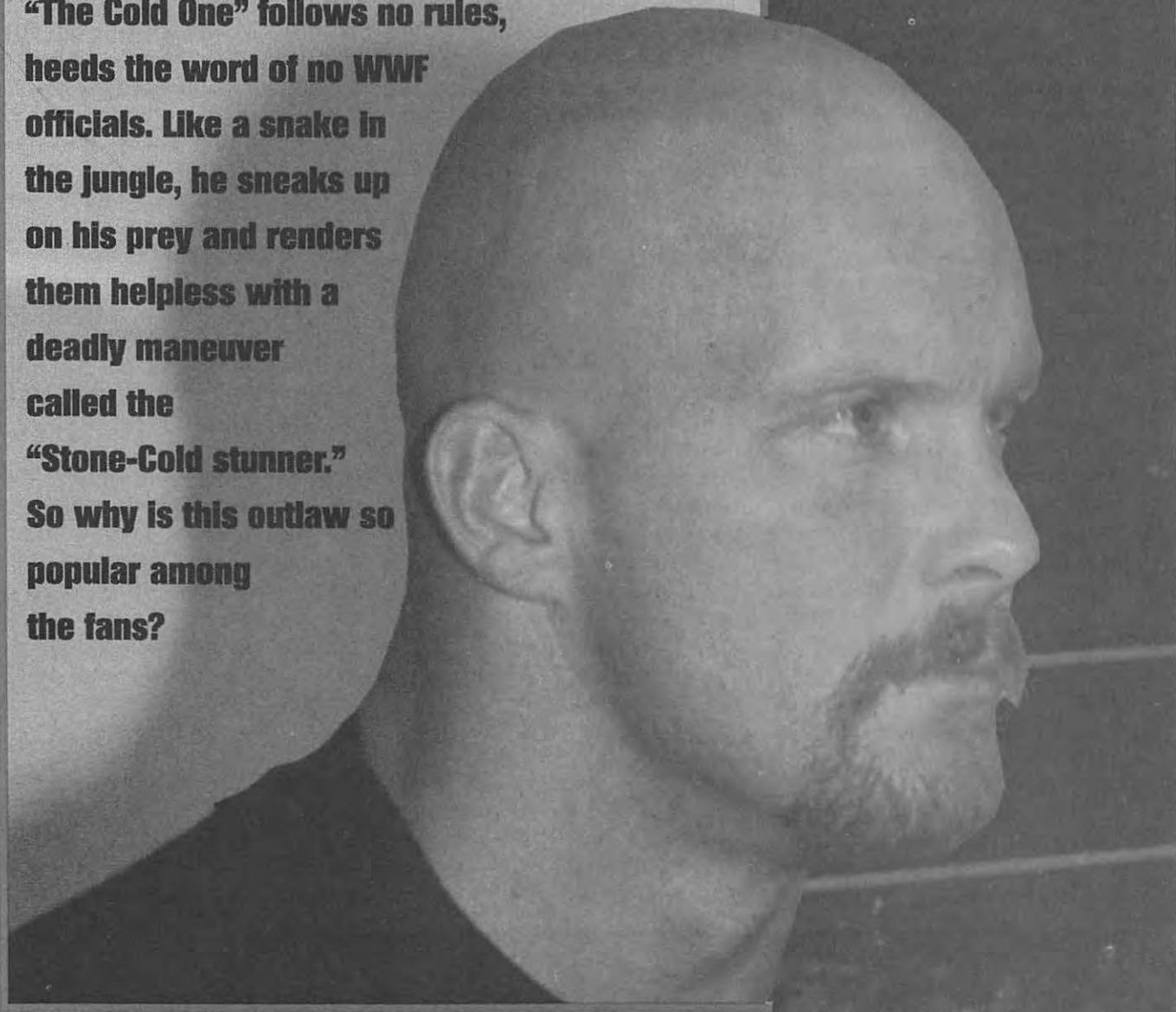
MARTINSBURG, WV

ATLANTA, GA



CHOSHU & INOKI

**"The Cold One" follows no rules,
heeds the word of no WWF
officials. Like a snake in
the jungle, he sneaks up
on his prey and renders
them helpless with a
deadly maneuver
called the
"Stone-Cold stunner."
So why is this outlaw so
popular among
the fans?**



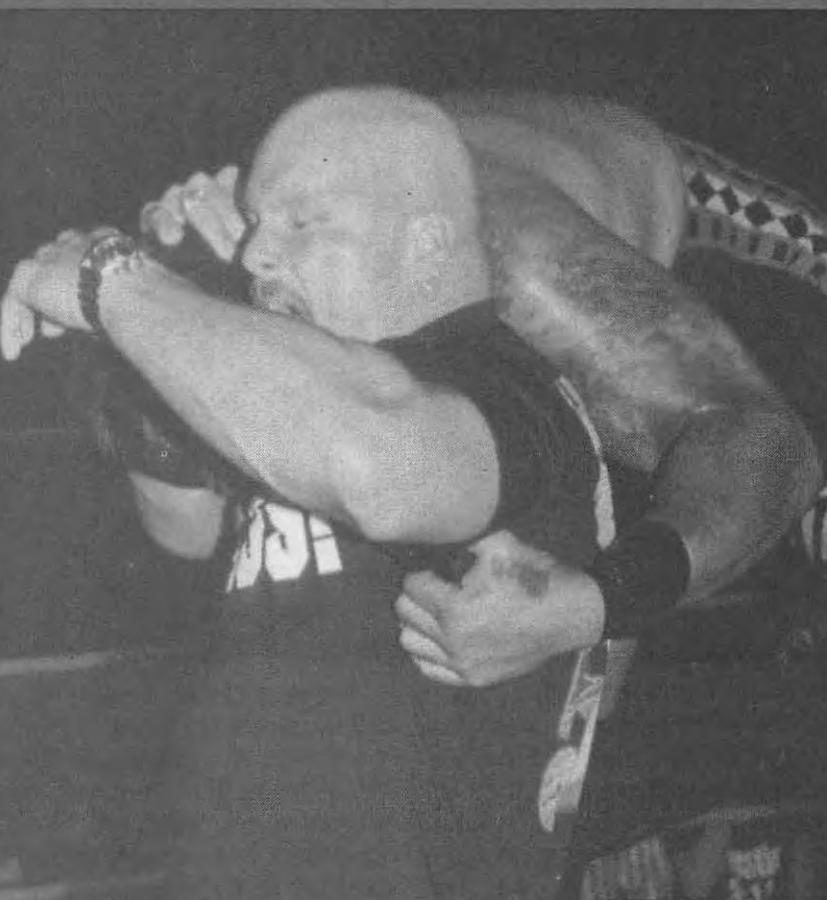
By Bryan Ethier

COME HERE, SON, and follow me," Steve Austin barked, as he rounded the red-bricked wall fronting the New Haven Coliseum in Connecticut. "Everybody in that locker room has it out for me. Everybody has it out for Steve Austin. They see the '3:16' and they think they'll get me. But they're wrong: Steve Austin always strikes first. Steve Austin does unto others before they do unto him. So sit your butt down, because Steve Austin is going to cause some hell!"

Some three hours later, Austin had lived up to his word. Without actually donning tights, he turned the lights out on five different wrestlers. Jeff Jarrett, Mark Henry, Rocky Maivia, Ken Shamrock, and "Marvelous" Marc Mero all got the "stunner," Austin's signature move. Austin even glared at Sable, pondering his next move. Then he walked away. Even The Frigid One is not so heartless as to stun the fair damsel.

Austin's "stunning" performances drew greater responses from the fans than the evening's legitimate matches. Each application of the

STEVE AUSTIN: A MAN AMONG BOYS



Steve Austin jars Kama Mustafa with a "Stone-Cold stunner." Is there anyone left in the WWF who hasn't been "stunned"?

painful finishing maneuver drove the fans to a state of frenzy and solidified Austin as wrestling's premier 'gray-hatted' hero.

These unwarranted assaults came without consideration to the recipient; the good, the bad, the ugly all got stunned. The fans roared when Austin humiliated fan favorite Shamrock; they rocked and hooted when he embarrassed rule-breaker Maivia.

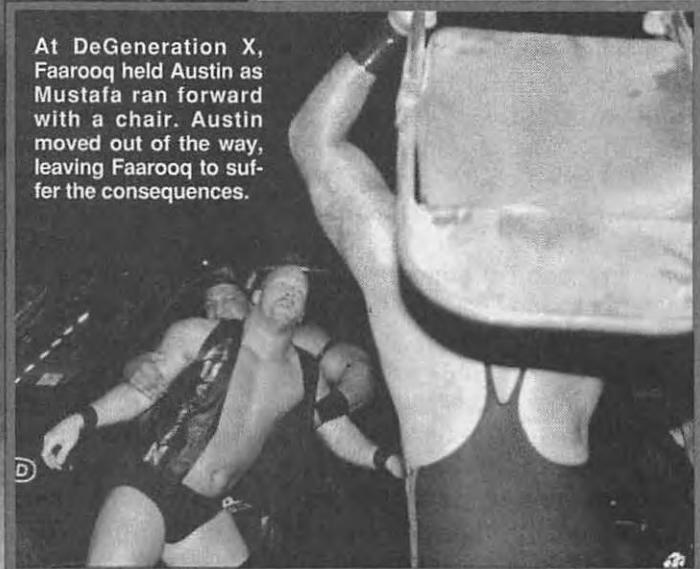
Fans know a hero when they see one.

But what the WWF's insightful followers don't understand is *why* Steve Austin is the organization's man among boys.

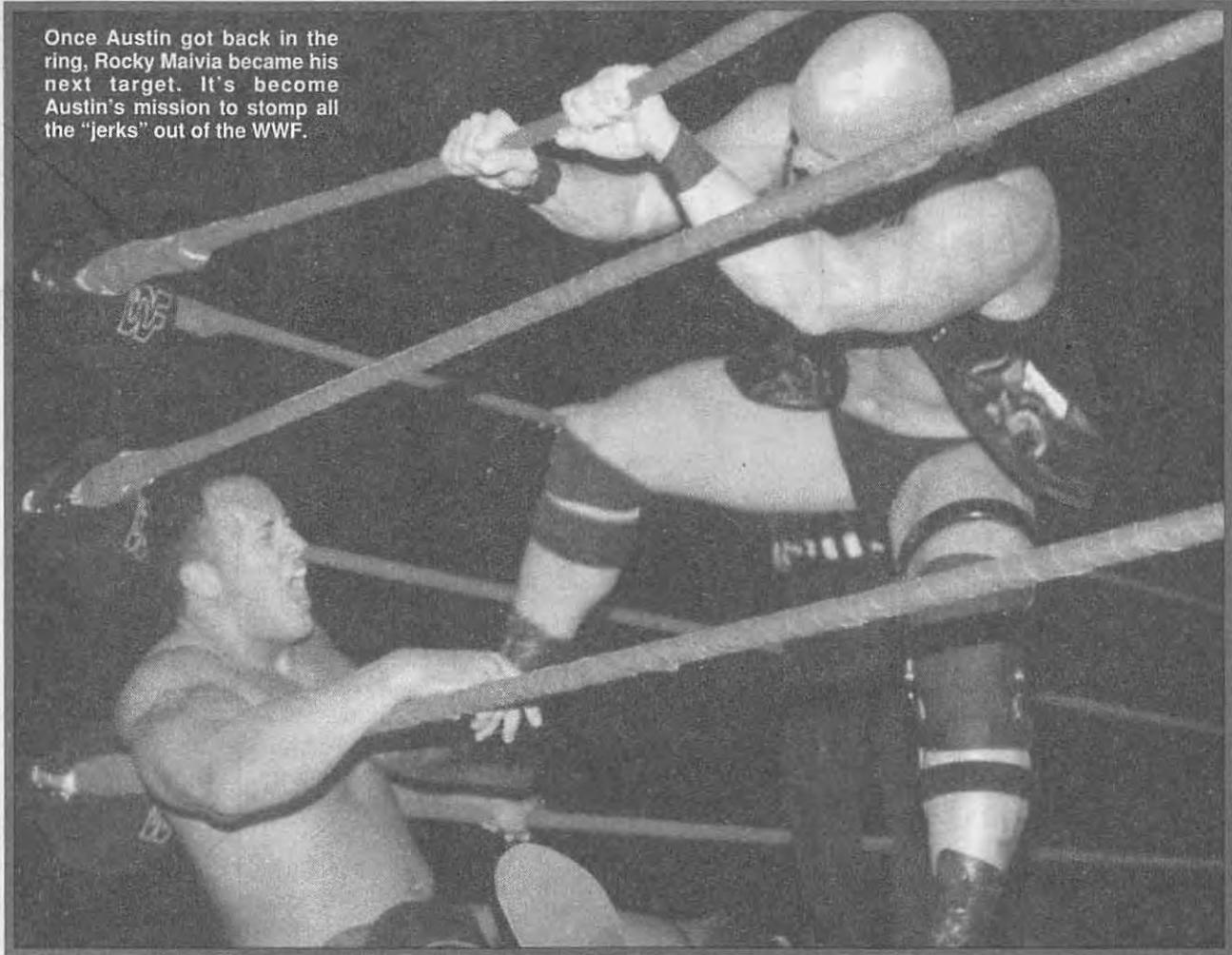
"I walk alone; I talk alone; I drink my beer alone; I kick butt alone," explained Austin, eloquently.

The man who has few friends and few enemies, has become the federation's vigilante, seeking to right wrong wherever he sees it ren-

At DeGeneration X, Faarooq held Austin as Mustafa ran forward with a chair. Austin moved out of the way, leaving Faarooq to suffer the consequences.



Once Austin got back in the ring, Rocky Maivia became his next target. It's become Austin's mission to stomp all the "jerks" out of the WWF.



dered. Of course, Austin plays by some unconventional rules: To him, everybody is breaking the law. That is because Austin sees himself as being above the law.

"Look at those jokers out here with their stupid, petty little arguments. DeGeneration X, Nation of Domination, Undertaker vs. Kane, Mankind vs. Paul Bearer, Mero against Sable, Goldust against Marlena. These clowns don't deserve to be on the same planet as me, never mind the same wrestling card. They're a disgrace to wrestling, and I'm embarrassed to share the same television time with 'em. Get 'em the hell out!"

Austin's contempt extends to everyone from I-C beltholder Maivia to WWF head Vince McMahon. When the federation kingpin asked Austin to get a physician's permission before returning to action, "Stone-Cold" responded by sending

McMahon to the mat with a "stunner." When Austin was unable to defend the I-C title, McMahon ordered the champ to turn the belt over to Maivia. Instead, Austin responded by using the "stunner" on Maivia. Then, a week later, he hurled the belt into a river.

"He's Wyatt Earp using the 'stunner' instead of a Colt .45," explained WWF broadcaster Jim Ross. "He sees bad men running rampant in his community and he wants to clean them right out of town. You may not agree with his style of law enforcement, but you must respect him for taking a stand."

Austin's fan appeal is simple. He bows to no man.

"Wouldn't you just like to walk up to your boss and send him flying with a 'Stone-Cold stunner?'" said Jerry Lawler, rhetorically. "He's everything we'd all want in a President."

It's difficult to explain what Austin is. Few people are close to Austin, who earned his wrestling badge in Texas. Away from the ring, he is reserved, almost withdrawn. He is a virtual loner, and he rarely opens up about his family or his past. He is the unknown cowboy riding into a new town on a chestnut-colored horse. The "Pale Rider."

Without in-depth knowledge of his upbringing, it is difficult to determine what truly motivates Steve Austin. This enigma clearly considers himself the best wrestler around. Yet, unlike nemesis Shawn Michaels, Austin's actions do not appear motivated by an insatiable need to be in the spotlight. When Austin does wreak havoc in the ring, he sneaks out as quickly and as silently as he comes in. The rattler, without the noisy rattle.

He goes his own way, follows his own path without remorse, regret, or

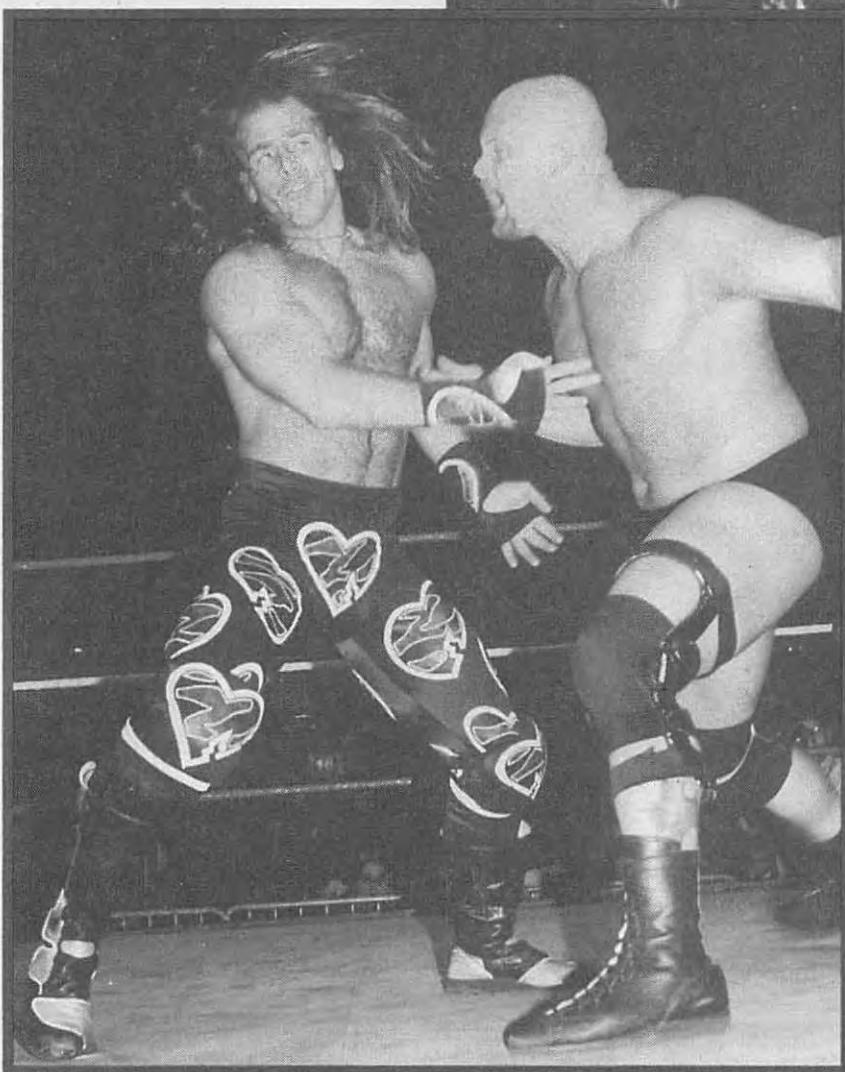
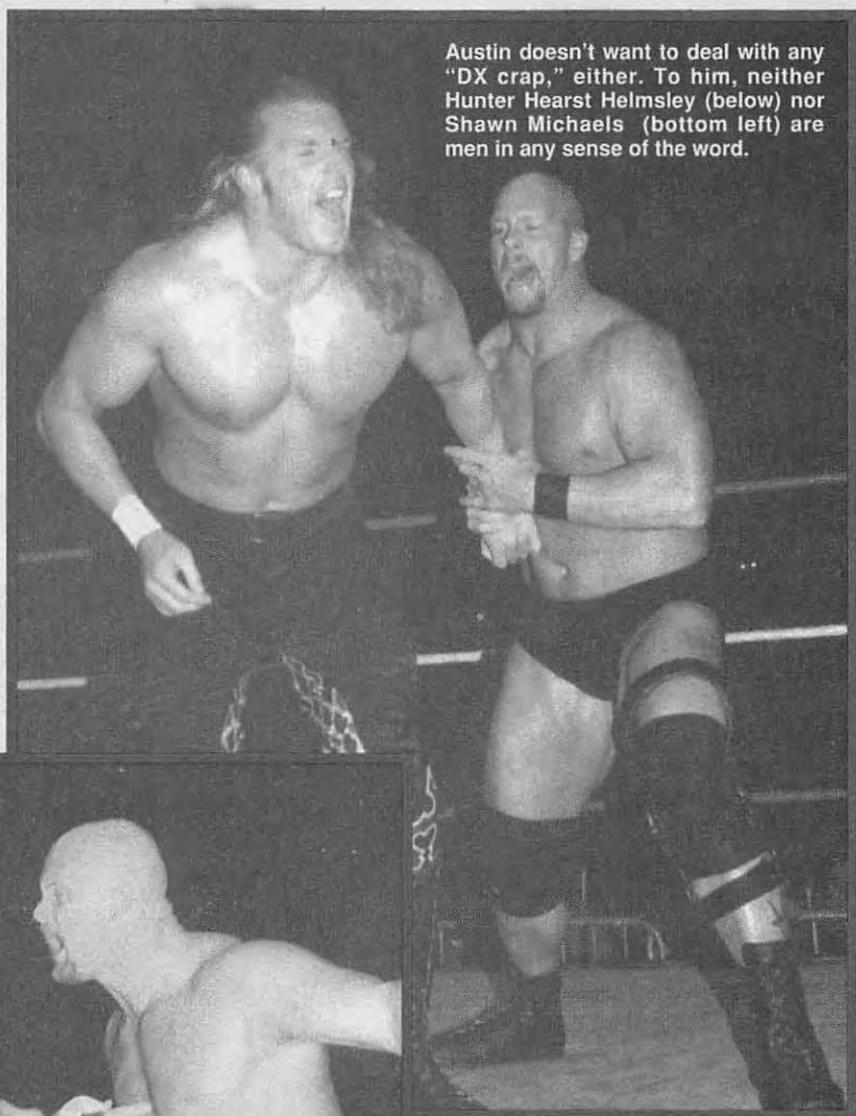
the need for acceptance. Despite being struck with spinal shock syndrome last year, he ducks from no one and fulfills his contractual responsibilities. Even if he risks paralysis.

Noble traits, these are.

So why does Steve Austin raise the ire of his boss, the TV announcers, and so many of his colleagues?

"His greatest strengths as a wrestler are his greatest weaknesses as a human being," explained Ken Shamrock. "A real hero leads by example. Austin does not. A leader raises the potential of those around him; he creates a better world for all to live. Essentially, a hero puts the needs of others before his own needs. Does Austin? Consider how rusty the Intercontinental belt must be by now, at the bottom of that river."

Austin doesn't want to deal with any "DX crap," either. To him, neither Hunter Hearst Helmsley (below) nor Shawn Michaels (bottom left) are men in any sense of the word.



True, but through his controversial actions, Steve Austin has created a buzz of excitement throughout the wrestling community. The fans adore this rough-edged Robin Hood who steals the ego of his opponents and gives the fans something to cheer about. And, ultimately, isn't that the job of a professional wrestler?

"I want to be just like Steve Austin," said nine-year-old Rich Cutlip, moments after the *Raw Is War* show in New Haven. "'Stone-Cold' always beats up the bad guys." The fact that a nine-year-old no longer discerns the difference between wrestling's "good" guys and "bad" guys says something for the way Steve Austin has revolutionized wrestling. □

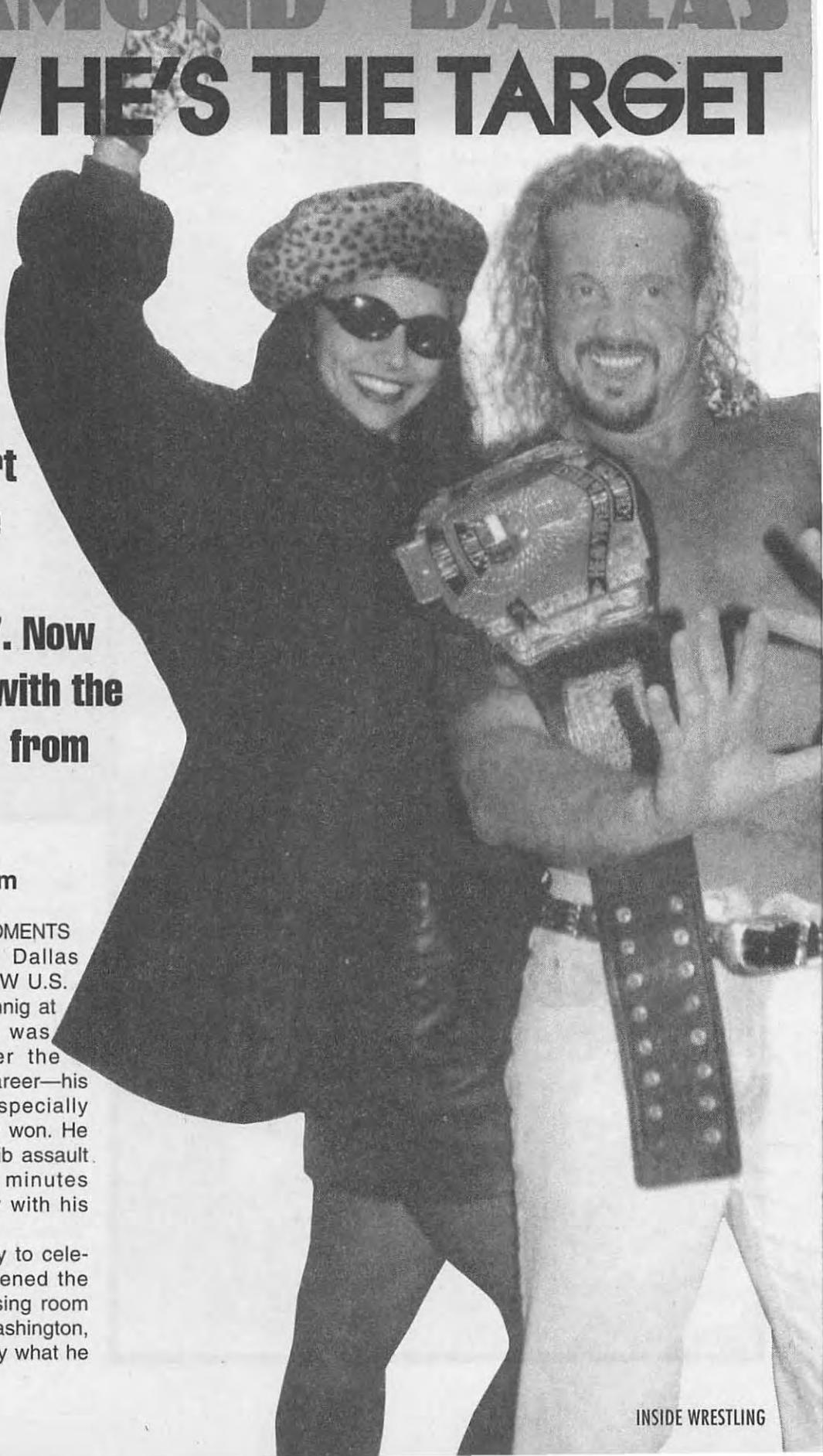
"DIAMOND" DALLAS NOW HE'S THE TARGET

Page scored the biggest victory of his career when he defeated the NWO's Curt Hennig for the U.S. title at Starrcade '97. Now he must deal with the challenges ... from all sides

By Dave Rosenbaum

THIS HAPPENED MOMENTS after "Diamond" Dallas Page won the WCW U.S. title by beating Curt Hennig at Starrcade '97. Page was drunk with pride over the biggest victory of his career—his first U.S. title—and especially proud about the way he won. He overcame a back and rib assault by Hennig for seven minutes before winning cleanly with his "Diamond cutter."

Now Page was ready to celebrate, but when he opened the door to the WCW dressing room at the MCI Center in Washington, D.C., he was shocked by what he



PAGE STRIKES GOLD! OF THE NWO AND WCW!



Page vs. Hennig was one of three huge WCW vs. NWO battles at Starrcade. Even though he won, Page, who once said there weren't enough WCW wrestlers willing to stand up to the NWO, was greeted by silence in the WCW locker room after the match.

Hennig dominated Page in the early going by targeting his injured ribs and back. Page later swung the momentum in his favor and won the match with a "Diamond cutter." Then it was time to celebrate—or was it?



DDP has always been one of WCW's most reliable soldiers in the war against the NWO. Now that he holds a title, his months of service might be overlooked by many of his "friends."



When he hasn't been battling the NWO in recent months, Page has had heated matches with the likes of Eddy Guerrero (above) and Ric Flair (right). These men might want to face him again now. Members of the NWO are no longer Page's only enemies.

saw ... or didn't see.

Nobody was there.

"Where is everybody?" Page asked out loud.

He surveyed the room. He walked back into the trainer's room, figuring maybe his WCW friends were going to surprise him.

But there was nothing. No champagne.

"Where is everybody?" Page asked again out loud. "Doesn't anybody want to celebrate?"

"They're all outside," said the trainer, who Page hadn't noticed

was standing on the other side of the room. "Watching Zbyszko vs. Bischoff. Why don't you go out there, too? Nothing going on here."

"Ah, forget about it," Page groaned. "Besides, I could use a rubdown. My back's starting to

hurt again."

Page was downcast. After the victory, nobody had rushed to congratulate him in the ring. Now that he had the belt and was ready for some late-night celebrating, there was nobody to celebrate with. He was alone.





And he would remain that way. Because while the victories by Zbyszko and Sting later that evening would mobilize the WCW troops behind those two men, there was no such mobilization behind Page.

Hadn't he become the U.S. champion? Sure.

Hadn't he wrested a title away from the NWO? That's right.

And now he had become the target of both the NWO and WCW.

A week later, Page pinned Chris Jericho at *Nitro*. Three days after that, he beat Kevin Nash by disqualification at the inaugural *Thunder*.

Meanwhile, one thing was on the minds of WCW and NWO wrestlers alike: "How can I get a shot at Page?"

"The U.S. title is different from the World title," explained Lex Luger. "The World title is the ultimate, the top of the heap, the most important belt in wrestling. It meant a lot to the WCW wrestlers to get the belt away

from the NWO, even if Sting's victory was overturned. The U.S. title is something entirely different. Everybody wants it because getting it means you're ready to take the next step. I don't think anybody's going to hesitate going after DDP."

For more than a year, Page has been one of WCW's leaders against the NWO, sacrificing his body and putting himself front and center against the NWO's core on a nightly basis. His refusal to join the NWO resulted in one of the hottest feuds of the year, as Page risked humiliation—and the humiliation of Kimberly—to fight for what he felt was right. Page hated the NWO, and every member of the NWO hated Page.

In many ways, the Page vs. Hennig match was a battle of a man who refused to sell out to the NWO against a man who did sell out.

But Page's popularity among his WCW cohorts has waned slightly. During the days before the Hennig match, several WCW wrestlers accused Page of being too cocky and urged him to approach the match with a more serious attitude. Page's apparent cockiness wasn't the reason no WCW wrestlers were in the dressing room after his U.S. title victory. They really were watching Zbyszko vs. Bischoff, and then Sting vs. Hogan.

Hours later, however, in the victorious WCW dressing room, Page was still looking for his share of the spotlight.

"Sting had just won the World title, Zbyszko had just saved *Nitro*, and here's Page acting like he was the star of the night," said one WCW star who demanded anonymity. "He should have shown a little more humility. Just a little. I mean, sure, it was a huge victory, but it wasn't his night. Then he proposed a toast to himself. That was the last straw. Everybody just ignored him."

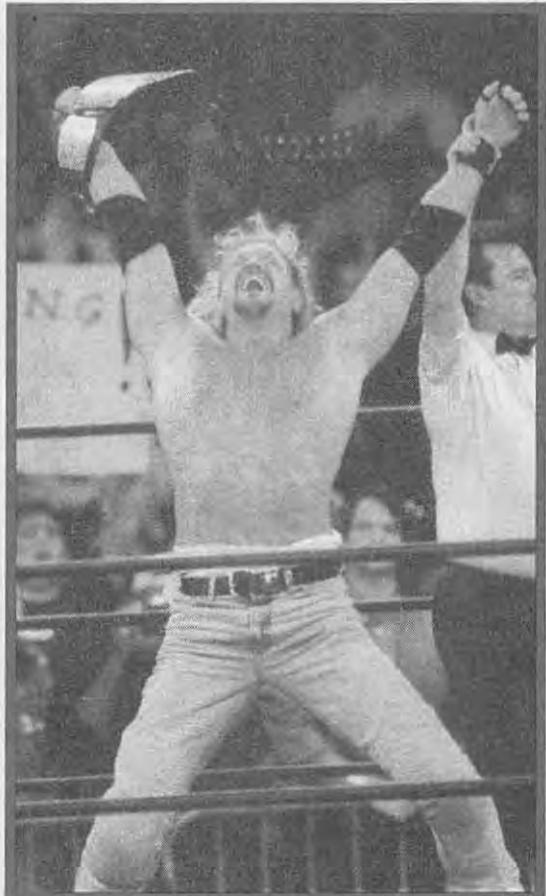
Page maintains that the toast was made in honor of WCW's successful night, not just his title victory, but the same WCW wrestler said Page's victory was no cause for celebration. "Even Page should have realized that this is an individual sport and winning basically made him a target. Why should anyone care if Page won, especially when he started bragging about it?"

Page denied that he was bragging and insisted that he just wanted to share the happiness of his moment. Maybe he was right. Nobody cared, however—not on that night. But they care now.

Page is the U.S. champion.

"How long would you like to see him hold the title?" Bill Goldberg was asked.

"Not for long," Goldberg spat. "Not for long."



It was a moment of sheer joy for DDP when he had his hand raised by referee Randy Anderson and he got to hold that U.S. belt high over his head. There are a lot of other wrestlers who want to experience that same feeling.

I isillusioned, isgruntled, isgusted

IS THE WWF SCREWING ANOTHER HART?

Frustrated by his inability to land title shots, exasperated by DeGeneration X, and at odds with his boss, Owen Hart now wonders, *What must I do to catch a break in the WWF?*

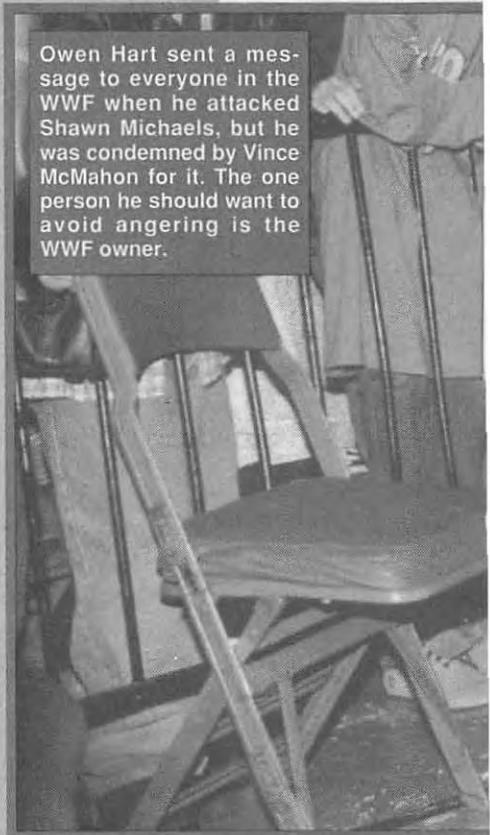
By Bryan Ethier

O WEN HART DID a little more than just ruffle Vince McMahon's shirt when he grabbed the WWF owner by his collar at a *Raw Is War* taping in December. He laid down the terms

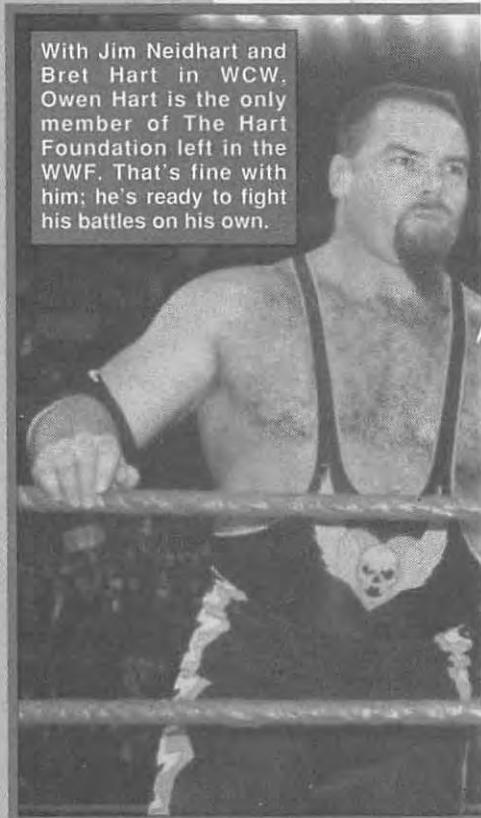
for the WWF's newest feud.

A war between the youngest member of wrestling's proudest family and the sport's most visible bureaucrat doesn't make sense, but many wrestling fans knew that a quarrel between the two was inevitable.

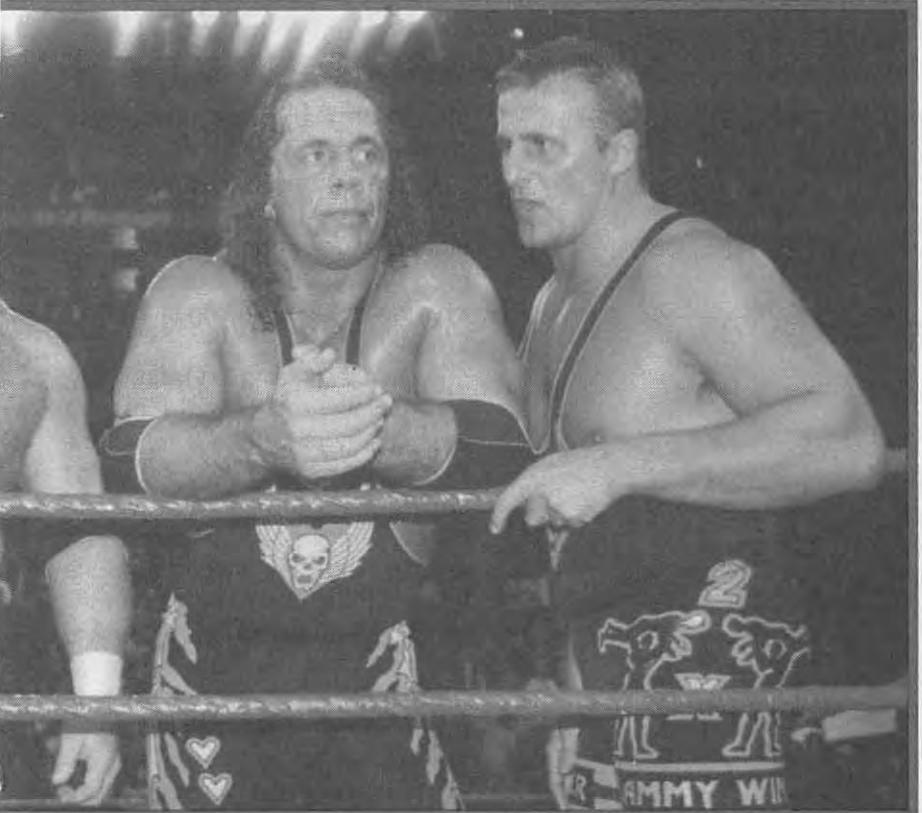
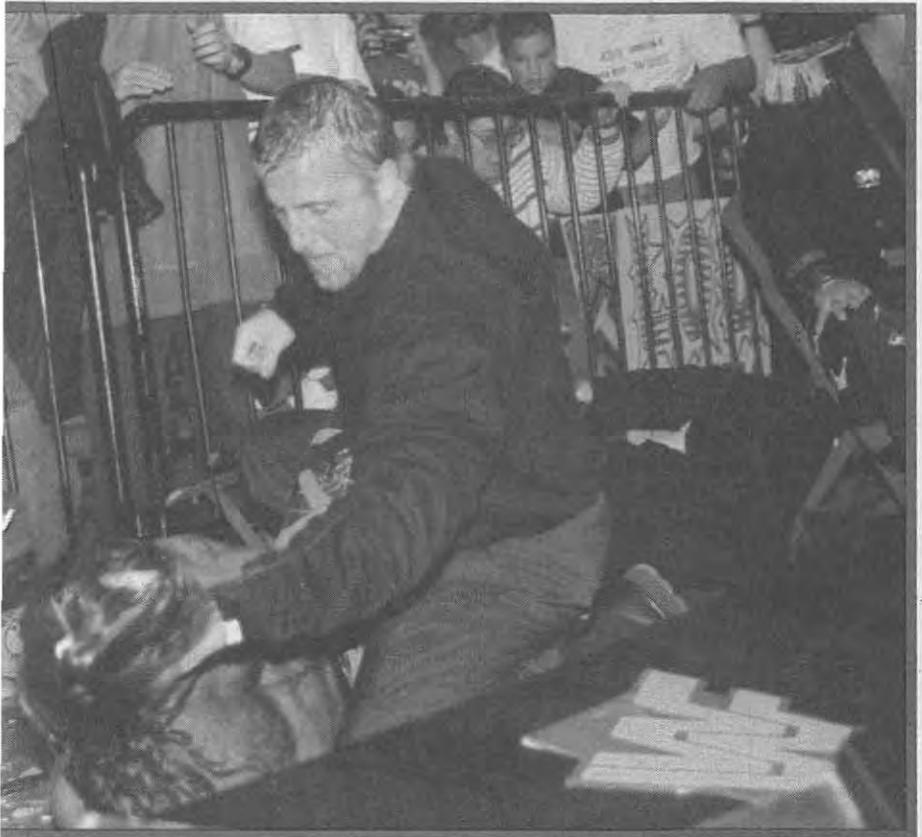
Owen Hart sent a message to everyone in the WWF when he attacked Shawn Michaels, but he was condemned by Vince McMahon for it. The one person he should want to avoid angering is the WWF owner.



With Jim Neidhart and Bret Hart in WCW, Owen Hart is the only member of The Hart Foundation left in the WWF. That's fine with him; he's ready to fight his battles on his own.



Only a few weeks earlier, McMahon and Bret Hart shook up the wrestling world by contentiously parting ways. The fallout from this



breakup was predictable: Bret left immediately for WCW. But with Davey Boy Smith mending from knee surgery (and expected to

appear in WCW) and Jim Neidhart also jumping to WCW, Owen Hart became the sole survivor of The Hart Foundation. The baby of Stu

and Helen Hart's family was suddenly the head of the family. And this black sheep wasted no time in voicing his displeasure with McMahon.

Hart declared his long-term intentions on December 7, when he came out of the crowd to assault WWF champ Shawn Michaels at the conclusion of Michaels' match with Ken Shamrock. Dressed in black and stealing through the crowd like a cat burglar, Hart repeated the attack a night later.

There was little doubt that Owen, who now carries the mantle once borne by his older brother, was on a quest to re-establish his credentials.

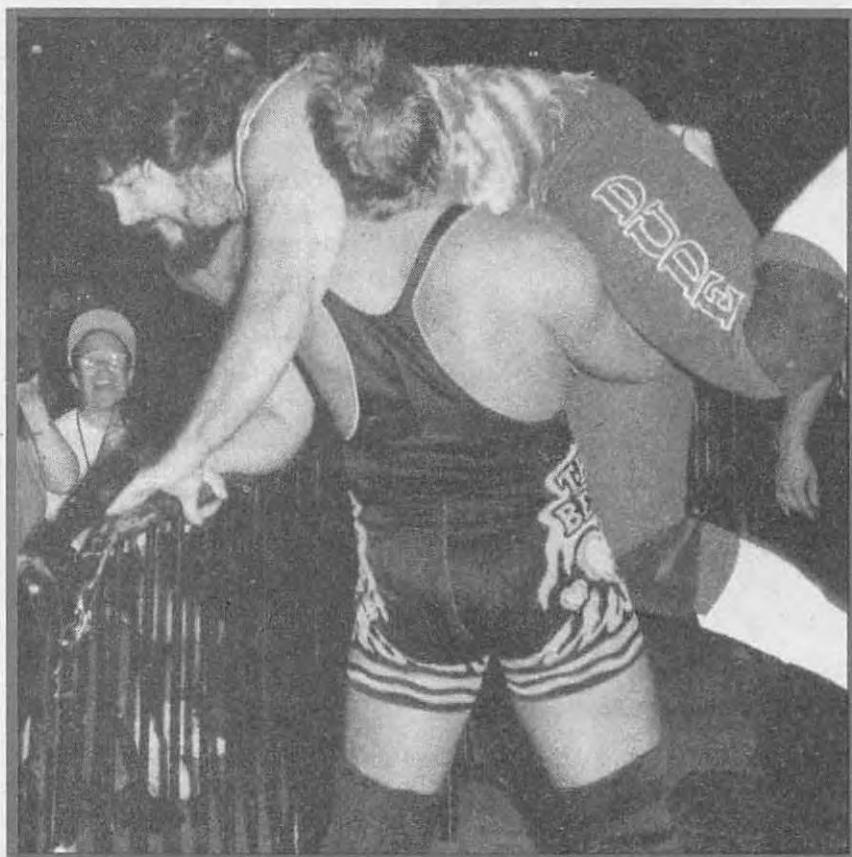
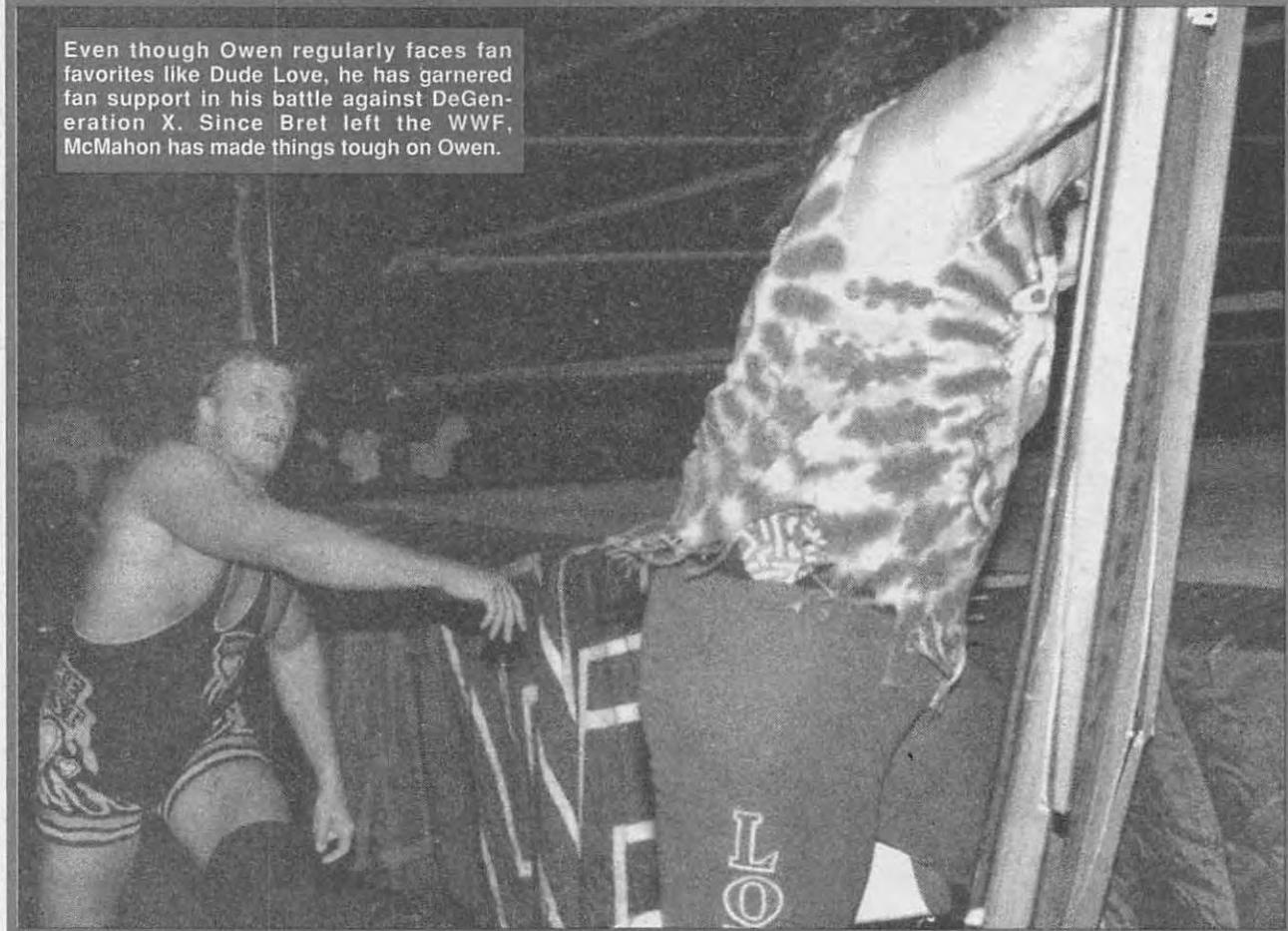
He might have succeeded had two factors not found their way into McMahon's consciousness. First, Hart made his way through the audience—a threat to fan safety. Second, Hart stalked the wrong wrestler—Shawn Michaels. Despite their rocky relationship, McMahon knows how much "The Heartbreak Kid" means to his company. On both counts McMahon sent a message to Hart: "Mess with the company and you mess with me."

That left Owen bucking the WWF system, with the voice of authority, McMahon, in direct opposition to him. Why has McMahon made himself another obstacle for Hart to overcome? Why has he placed himself between Owen and the WWF title? Is the WWF really screwing another Hart?

Most fans seem to think so. For the first time in four years, Owen is hearing a lot of cheers in the United States. That may be because the black sheep and underdog images have made Owen Hart a more sympathetic figure to the fans than the boorish Michaels. Also, Owen is the last remaining member of the Hart Foundation.

"Owen Hart knows this is his chance to keep the Hart legend alive," says Jerry Lawler. "He is The Hart Foundation now. After years and years of wrestling in Bret's shadow, the bright lights have finally found Owen. He is after a title, but

Even though Owen regularly faces fan favorites like Dude Love, he has garnered fan support in his battle against DeGeneration X. Since Bret left the WWF, McMahon has made things tough on Owen.



more than that, he is after Shawn Michaels personally."

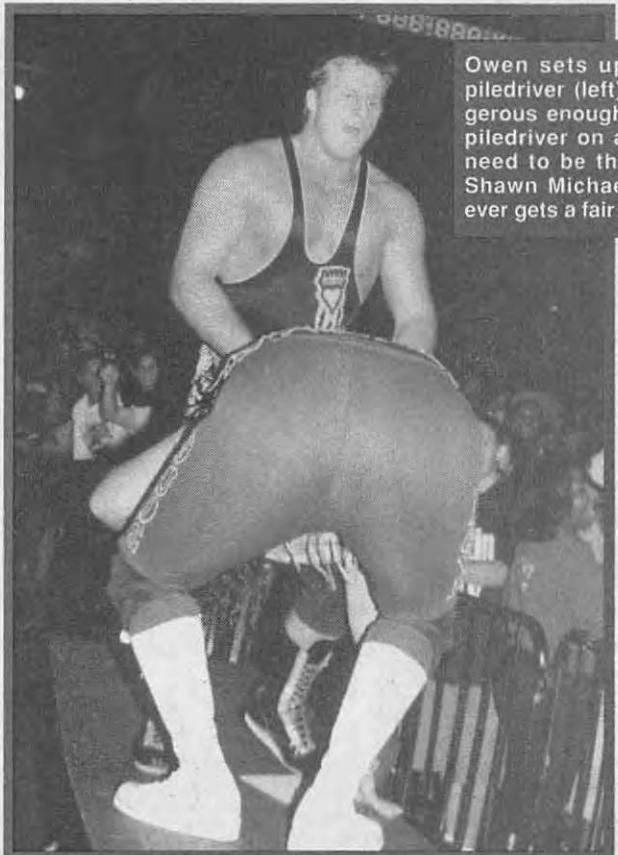
Obsessively so, say some WWF mavens, who worry that Hart is more concerned with his feud with "The Heartbreak Kid" than he is with winning the WWF World title.

Not so, according to Owen.

"I have one goal and that is to assume my place at the top of the WWF," he said. "I will do that by showing vermin like Shawn Michaels and Vince McMahon that I am the man they should hang the future of this company on. If they would grant me the opportunity to wrestle for the title more than once every 400 years, I might be able to open some of the closed eyes around here."

Three years ago, when his brother Bret reigned over the federation, Owen Hart consistently "earned" title shots. The intrigue of a brother vs. brother feud made the matchup a natural box office draw. Today,

Owen sets up Dude Love for a piledriver (left). As if it's not dangerous enough, Hart executes the piledriver on a table (right). He'll need to be this ruthless to beat Shawn Michaels ... assuming he ever gets a fair match.



Bret isn't around to help his brother up the ladder.

Yet some WWF personalities feel that Owen doesn't need Bret's help.

"It's time the wrestling world really looked at Owen Hart the wrestler," said Jim Cornette. "Not just Owen Hart, brother of Bret Hart. Owen is a strong wrestler. And he is a former Intercontinental and tag team champ as well."

Lawler remarked that he is probably the most underrated superstar in the WWF.

But since the "Hitman" left, McMahon has made it difficult for Owen to remain in the spotlight. The continuing success of Kane, The Undertaker, Cactus Jack, Austin, Ken Shamrock, and Michaels, plus the return of Jeff Jarrett almost make Hart superfluous.

"That's odd ... considering how thin the WWF ranks are," said a former WWF employee now aligned with an independent federation. "The WWF should welcome Owen Hart with open arms. He's exciting, energetic, and a lot of fun to watch."

The world got the chance to see



Owen looks very serious when he comes to the ring now, and he has let the whole U.S.-Canada feud die. What happened at Survivor Series '97 seems to have changed his outlook.

a revitalized Owen Hart face off against Michaels on the December 29 Raw. But that match occurred without McMahon's support, because that evening Hunter Hearst Helmsley was scheduled to defend his European title against Hart. But

when a knee injury precluded Triple-H's participation, WWF Commissioner Sgt. Slaughter ordered Michaels to stand in for his DX colleague for the match.

What followed was one of the most exciting displays of pure technical wrestling that WWF fans had seen in months. Hart scored a number of near pinfalls, only to have Michaels somehow escape. And when he applied the "sharpshooter" against a worn-out Michaels, Owen appeared to be on his way to his first World title reign. But with referee Earl Hebner waiting for Michaels to give up, Helmsley shattered a crutch over Hart's head. That ended Owen's chance at reclaiming the glory many fans believe is due him.

"I was stunned at the cowardice shown by DeGeneration X during that match," said 16-year-old fan Frank Wilkes. "What does Owen Hart have to do to catch a break?"

As long as McMahon decides who gets a legitimate shot at the WWF title, don't expect Owen Hart to be anything but frustrated.

Some things never change. □

THERE'S NO MORE "WE" FOR BOOKER T

Will His Solo Success Ruin Harlem Heat?

When Booker T defeated Disco Inferno for the WCW TV title at Starrcade '97, a conflict between he and teammate Stevie Ray arose for the first time. Now is Booker T acting for the good of the team ... or the good of himself?

Booker T is all smiles as he raises the WCW TV belt high above his head. Stevie Ray doesn't seem quite as jubilant.

By Dave Rosenbaum

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN one member of a successful tag team wins a singles title and gets a taste of individual glory?

"Invariably, there's trouble," said Marty Jannetty, who achieved most of his success as part of The

Rockers with Shawn Michaels. "It can't work. The most important ingredient of a successful tag team is the willingness of each man to sacrifice himself for the other. You're willing to share the glory, but in the end, the glory is twice as great. You have to realize that."

"It doesn't have to mean trou-

ble," Scott Steiner disagreed. "I mean, me and Rick have wrestled in singles competition and have been very successful, so it doesn't mean everything has to fall apart. Sometimes it keeps things fresh and it keeps me and Rick from getting on each other's nerves too much. You know, doing something different, maybe honing your wrestling skills, and becoming stronger as a team. Of course, we're brothers, so maybe that makes it different."

"It means the end of the road for the team," said Davey Boy Smith, whose former partner was Owen Hart. "Singles and tag team wrestling don't mix. To be successful as a tag team, both members have to dedicate themselves 100 percent to the cause, and once that stops happening, you're through. There's no I in 'tag team'."

So what happens now that Booker T has won the WCW TV belt? Will it spell the end of Harlem Heat, one of the most successful tag teams of this decade with seven WCW World tag team championships and two PWI Tag Team of the Year awards?

"Nothing happens," Booker T barked. "We're still a team."

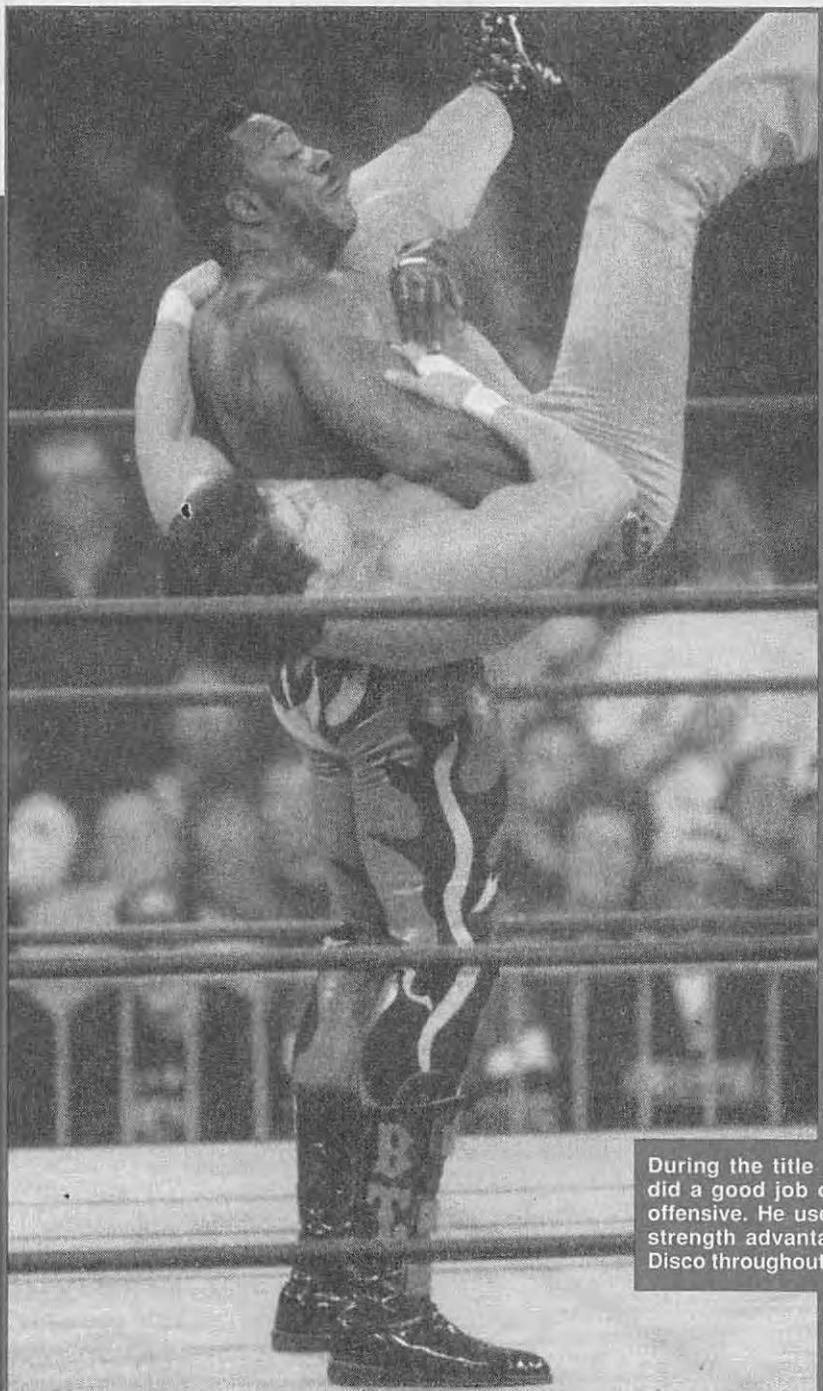
"Is it over?" Stevie Ray asked. "Man, I can't believe your askin' that question. My brother won a major title. I'm happy for him, but life goes on with Harlem Heat."

Or does it?

Defending a major title is one of the most difficult things a wrestler can do, and defending the WCW TV title is especially difficult. It's a volatile championship. Most years,

the TV title changes hands five or six times. It is defended on a regular basis, on nearly every Nitro broadcast and now probably on nearly every

Thunder broadcast. While only a select few can challenge for the World title, just about every WCW wrestler is eligible for a shot at the



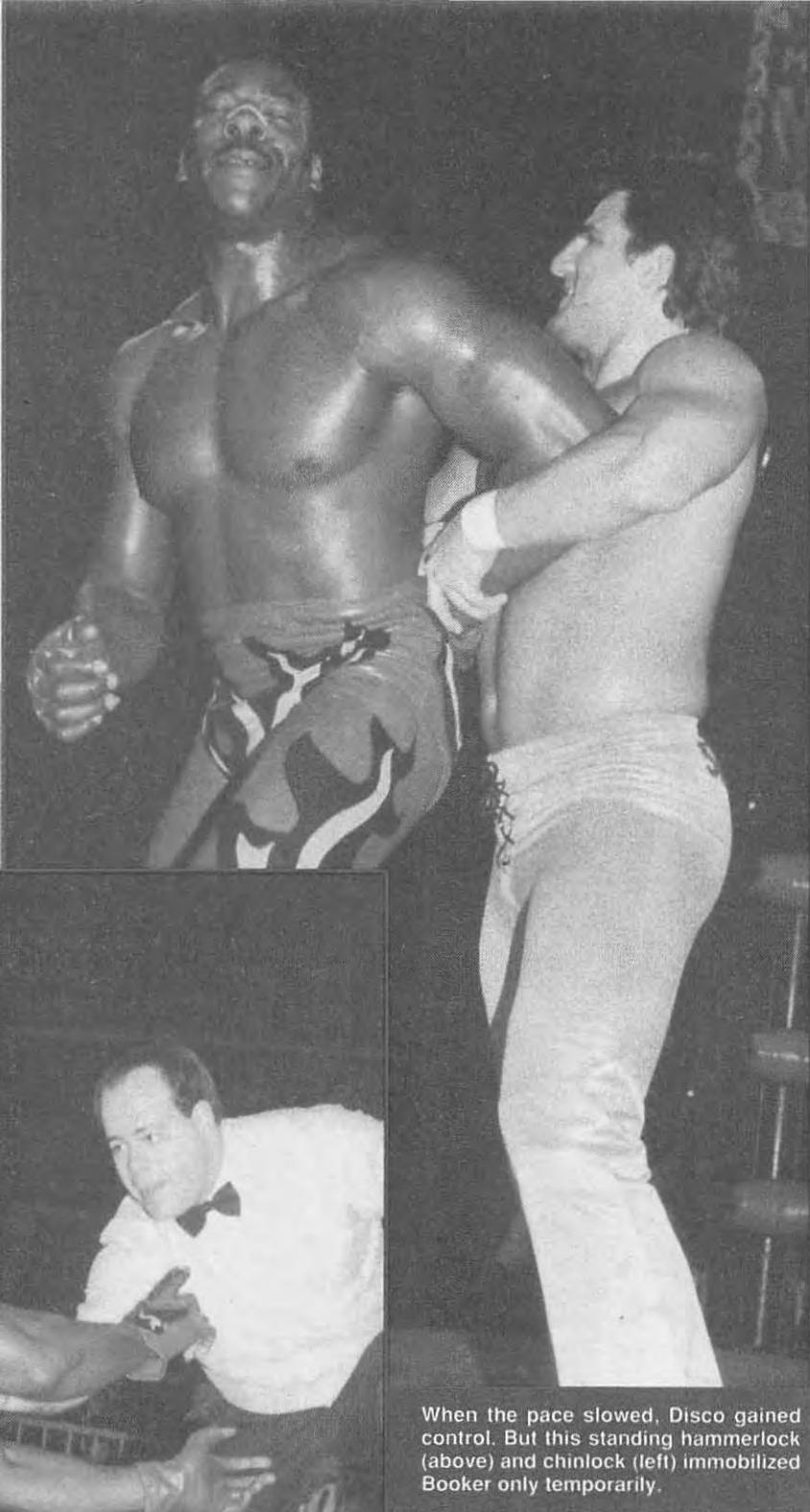
During the title match, Booker T did a good job of staying on the offensive. He used his height and strength advantages to dominate Disco throughout the match.

TV belt. That's how Disco Inferno won it in the first place ... and how Booker T got the match against Disco Inferno at Starrcade '97.

Everybody wants the TV title. Even Stevie Ray.

"Why not?" Stevie Ray asked. "I can remember as a kid, wrestling my friends in the streets and on the playgrounds. Nothing came of it. Hell, if you can wrestle your friends for fun, why can't I wrestle my teammate for fun? What's the big deal? What I have is his and what he has is mine, so we can wrestle and still be brothers."

Maybe. Maybe not. Although Stevie Ray came to the ring and congratulated Booker T after his victory at Starrcade, the two reportedly had a big argument later on in the dressing room. According to witnesses, Stevie Ray said, "This is our title. You should give me a title



When the pace slowed, Disco gained control. But this standing hammerlock (above) and chinlock (left) immobilized Booker only temporarily.

shot." And Booker T said, "You don't understand. This is the TV title. There's no such thing as the TV tag team title. It's the TV title. It's mine and I'll wrestle you when I want to wrestle you, if I ever want to wrestle you."

Said one observer: "Right then, I knew Harlem Heat was history.

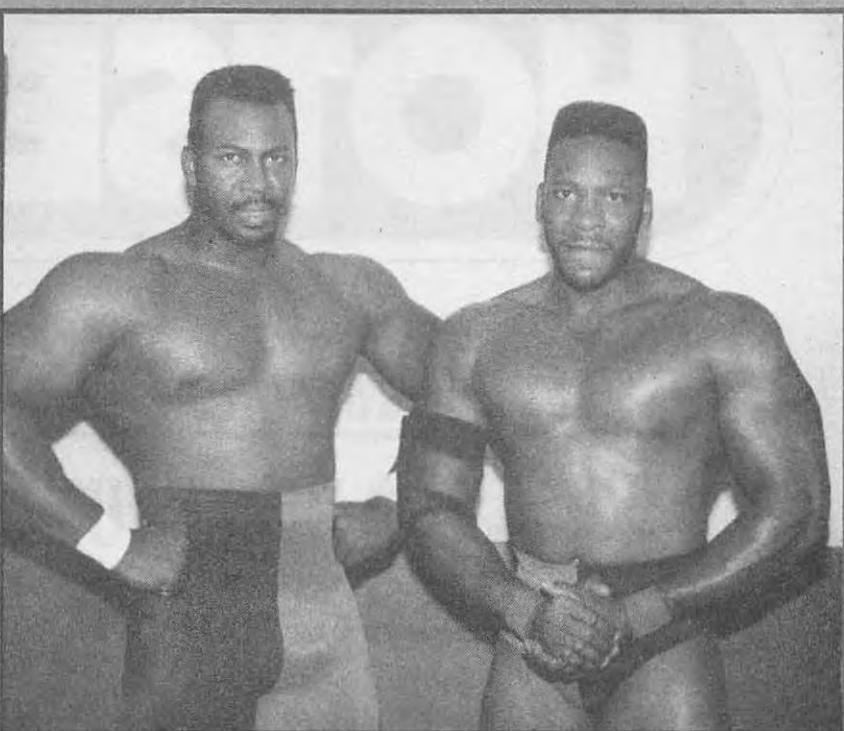
After teaming for so long, it must be difficult for Harlem Heat to consider singles careers. Apparently, Booker T is willing to make the switch anyway.

Booker T's got the singles bug and Stevie Ray feels left behind. He oughta just salvage some pride and walk away."

There's no reason for that, said Booker T, who claimed the dressing room argument was "a misunderstanding between us that we've cleared up."

But how? Does Stevie Ray get his title shot?

"That's something we need to be talkin' about," Booker T said. "He's my brother. He's my partner. I want him to help me retain the TV title for as long as possible. Meanwhile, we can still be Harlem Heat. We can still go after the



World tag team title. It seems to me as if we've been pushed aside and now we need to take our rightful place, which is ahead of the Steiners and ahead of the NWO."

But does Booker T still have the fire to pursue a tag career? He has positioned himself for shots at the U.S. and World titles. Winning a world heavyweight title is every wrestler's dream. Booker T has already achieved one of his dreams, to win the World tag team title. Great athletes are fueled by goals, by the desire to achieve something new.

For Booker T, the WCW World tag team title is old.

The TV title is new. Singles competition is new.

And if this is new, does that make Stevie Ray old?

"That's exactly what it makes him," Marty Jannetty said. "No doubt about it. And believe me, I know." □

Harlem Heat showed plenty of unity when Stevie Ray helped Booker T ambush Disco a few weeks before the TV title match. Is their brotherly union still strong?

HOTSEAT

LARRY ZBYSZKO

"I NEVER REALLY UNDERSTOOD HATRED—UNTIL NOW!"

LARRY ZBYSZKO: SAVIOR of WCW. Who would have guessed it? Zbyszko, the self-proclaimed "Living Legend" was retired and enjoying his time in the broadcast booth. His outstanding career, which included two AWA World title reigns, was behind him. The man who had invoked enough passions to be voted 1980's Most Hated Wrestler of the Year was content.

But the NWO riled him to the point at which he felt he had no choice but to return to the ring and take on Eric Bischoff for the good of WCW. That's right, for the good of WCW. Zbyszko, who was hated by the fans for most of his career, had a chance to do something right for a change. And he did, by beating Bischoff at Starrcade '97 in a battle for control of Nitro.

It was a spectacular victory by Zbyszko, who overcame interference by Scott Hall—he placed a metal object in Bischoff's karate shoe—and benefited from interference by guest referee Bret Hart. Zbyszko's victory wasn't pretty, but it was effective. Nitro remains in WCW's hands.

Zbyszko vs. NWO has been a recurring theme in WCW. Not only

has Zbyszko feuded with Bischoff, but he has feuded with Hall, too. The NWO berated and insulted Zbyszko. He responded by just winning.

Senior Editor Bill Apter spoke with Zbyszko a few weeks after Starrcade. "He was exultant," Apter reported. "But he wasn't happy for himself. He was happy for WCW. He felt that his match was extremely important, that the future of wrestling was at stake, and that he did something very big by winning."

"If I had lost to Bischoff, it would have been a gray day for wrestling. A really sad day. And not just because it's the NWO, because it could have been any organization, any clique."

Q: Congratulations, Larry, on your fantastic victory at Starrcade. That must go down as one of the greatest victories of your career.

A: Can you believe it, Bill, that after all these years, I'm still talking about great victories? That's what makes this so gratifying. How many years ago was Bruno?

Q: Your feud with Bruno Sammartino peaked in 1980.

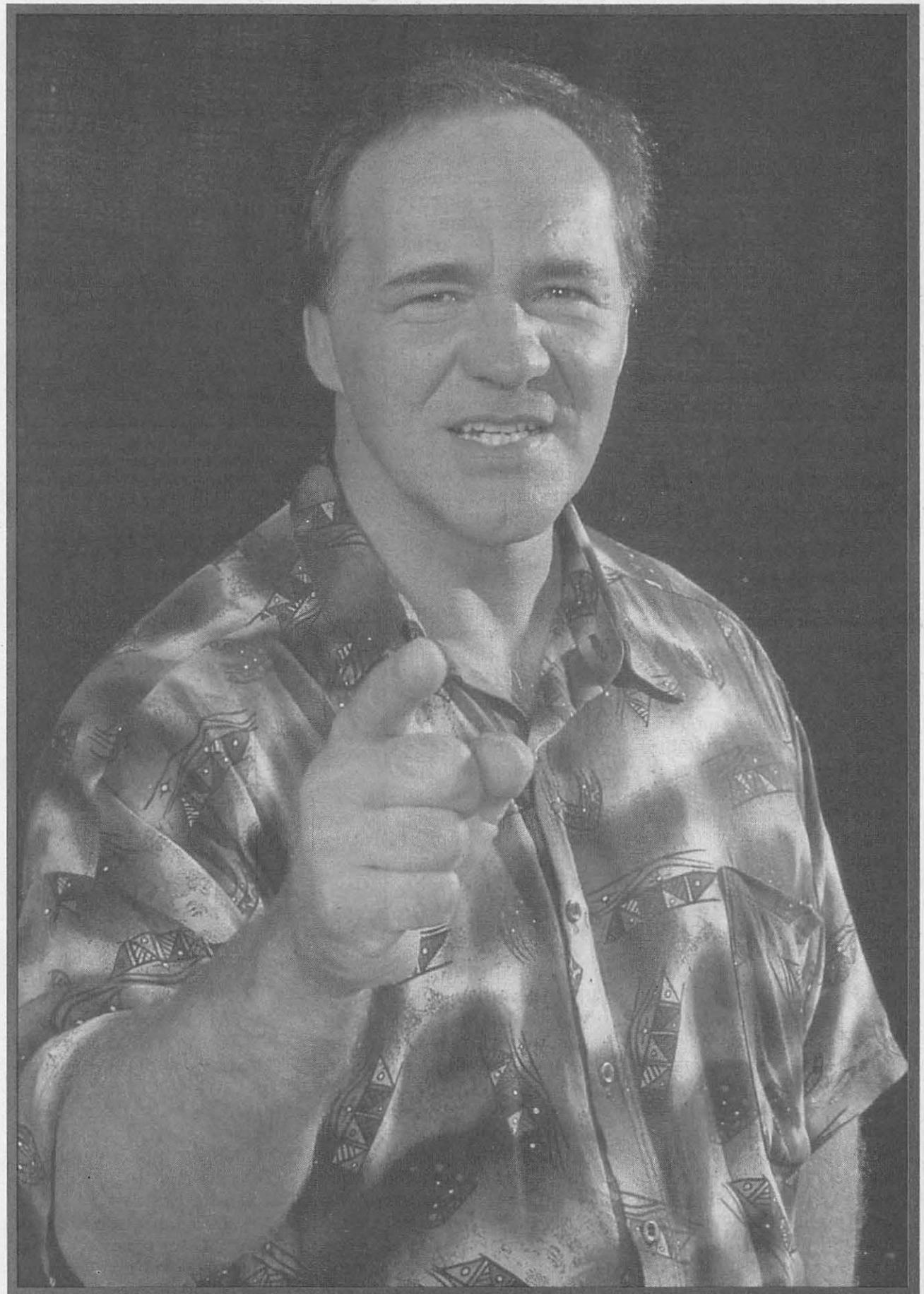
A: And how many years ago did I win the AWA World title?

Q: The last time was in 1990.

A: Well, now here I am, still going strong after all these years, and still making a contribution. That's what makes this so great. I'm still making a contribution.

Q: And a major one, at that. If you had lost ...

A: Don't even think about that. Bill, if I had lost to Bischoff, it would have been a gray day for wrestling. A really sad day. And not just because it's the NWO, because it could have been any organization, any clique, and that would have made it a sad day. Would it be a sad day if a group like The Four Horsemen got control of Nitro? Definitely. Would it have been a sad day if a





"That punk Bischoff, he's an example of everything that's wrong with society these days.

All attitude. All flash.
No substance!"

small group of WCW wrestlers got control of *Nitro*? No doubt about it. So this wasn't about personalities. This was about an organization keeping control of the most important TV show in wrestling history and keeping control away from a clique.

Q: Especially a clique like the NWO.

A: You've got that right. Especially the NWO. You know, those guys ...

Q: Yes?

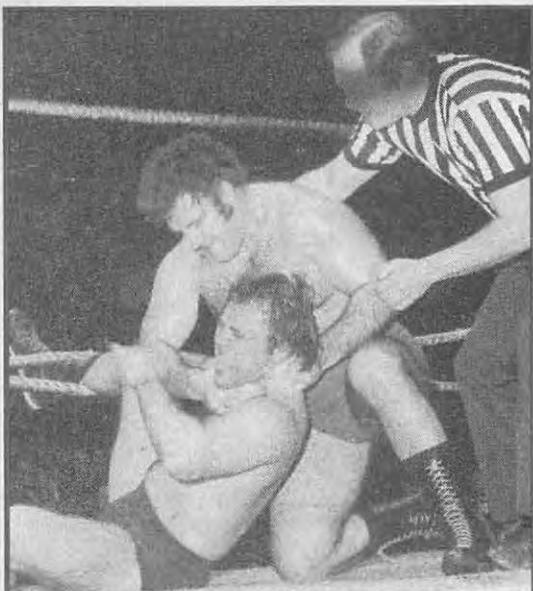
A: Well, let me put it this way. I hated Bruno Sammartino. Hated him with a passion. But even more than that, the fans hated me. Sammartino hated me, but the fans really hated me. To them, and to him, too, to a degree, I represented everything that was wrong with the world, not just with wrestling. I was despised, and you know what? I didn't understand it.

I didn't understand why I suddenly represented evil and had to be stopped. In a way, I still don't understand. Losing that cage match at Shea Stadium was one of the biggest disappointments of my life. I'd like to go back and wrestle it again, just go back in time for a day so I could beat Sammartino. But that hatred, the hatred the fans and Sammartino had for me, the way they looked at me. I never really understood hatred —until now!

Q: Because of the way you hate the NWO?

A: Not just me. A lot of people. The other WCW wrestlers, Lex Luger, Sting, and "Diamond" Dallas Page in particular. The pro-WCW fans. The announcers, like Schiavone and Dusty Rhodes. A lot of people. Yeah, me, sure. No doubt about it. That punk Bischoff, he's an example of everything that's wrong with society these days. All attitude. All flash. No substance.

The way he thinks he can throw his weight around and everything he says is the gospel. The way he fawns over "Hollywood" Hogan, that big joke. Scott Hall. Another big joke. Let me tell you something about Scott Hall. Was he ever AWA World champion? No. I was. What has Scott Hall ever done, except cop that attitude and walk around with



Bruno Sammartino, blinded by rage, resorted to choking Larry Zbyszko with his bare hands during their 1980 feud (above). Zbyszko never understood that kind of hatred until he finally got his hands on Eric Bischoff (below).



toothpicks hanging out of his mouth? What's that all about? What's with the greasy hair and that walk of his, like he's got a ton of bricks stuffed down his pants? Scott Hall is nothing. Zero. Nada.

Q: You really hate them.

A: The NWO. Let's take a look at the NWO for a second. What have they ever done on their own, without cheating?

Hogan wins the WCW World title, but, of course, he had to cheat. The World tag team belts. The NWO had to create their own. Then they beat the Steiners by cheating. The whole NWO mystique isn't mystifying at all, because there's a simple strategy behind everything they do. They break the rules. They interfere. They ambush people and attack from behind like cowards. Tell me, when was the last time an NWO wrestler challenged a WCW wrestler face-to-face, one-on-one, without one of his NWO buddies standing two feet away? When was the last time an NWO wrestler fought his battle on his own? If these guys are so tough, then why don't they prove it? Why don't they back their words with some action?

Q: On the other hand, Larry, let's face it: A lot of pro-NWO people will say that you benefited from Bret Hart's interference in your match against Bischoff at Starrcade.

A: Right. But so what? What happened before that? Hart just evened the score after Hall put that metal plate into

Bischoff's shoe. Bischoff didn't cheat in that match?

Q: Of course he did.

A: Right. And turnabout is always fair play. You know, that's something else the NWO has to learn. That turnabout is fair play. You know, it all goes back to the old Biblical phrase, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Well, the NWO is having stuff done unto them. Like the Hogan-Sting thing. We all know Nick Patrick is being paid off by the NWO. We know he wasn't going to let Sting win that match no matter what happened. In the days after that match, we saw whose side Patrick was on. It's a good thing Hart continued that match, because otherwise a bought-off referee would have had cost Sting the title. And I can understand why Sting was so mad at J.J. Dillon for holding up the belt. The way I see it, over the past two years, the NWO has gotten away with murder. But any time a WCW wrestler gets away with something, he doesn't get away with anything. The



"What has Scott Hall ever done, except cop that attitude and walk around with toothpicks hanging out of his mouth? What's that all about?"

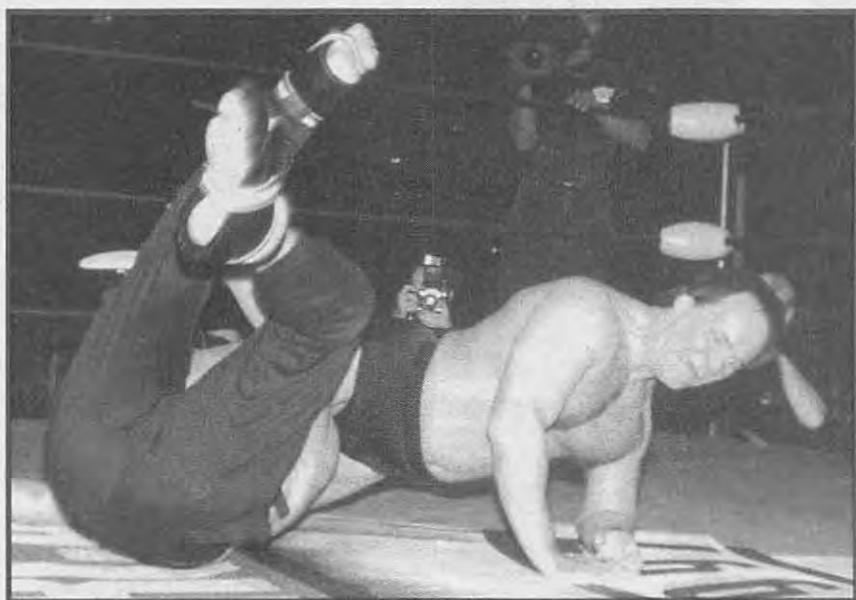
NWO never gets punished. The WCW wrestler always gets punished.

Q: You know, that reminds me of something my mother used to tell me, about how when a good person does something wrong, he always gets caught. It's because he doesn't know how to do things wrong. He doesn't know how to get away with things. The bad guy is an expert at doing wrong.

A: That's exactly right. And let me tell you something. There was a time when I was an expert, and maybe I still am. The NWO is dealing with the wrong man if they think they can put one over on me. Bischoff, Hall, all of them. Their time is up. The NWO is dead.

Q: Larry, thanks for your time.

A: Always a pleasure, Bill. I look forward to doing this again when my prediction comes true and the NWO is no more. □



Zbyszko's strategy against Bischoff, who boasts a martial arts background, was to use traditional wrestling holds to wear him down. This headscissors did the trick.

By Steve Anderson

"The torment of human frustration, whatever its immediate cause, is the knowledge that the self is in prison, its vital force and 'mangled mind' leaking away in lonely, wasteful self-conflict."

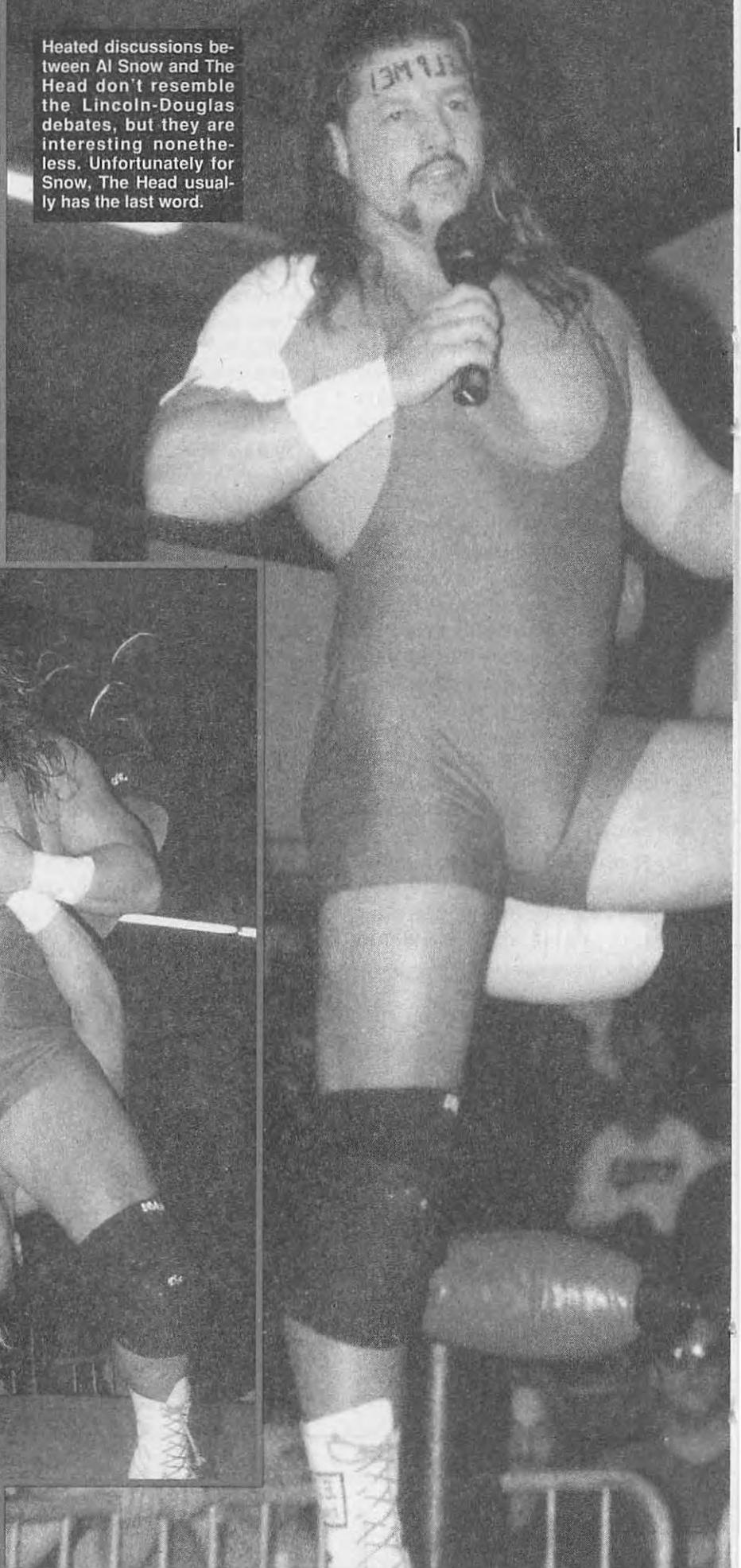
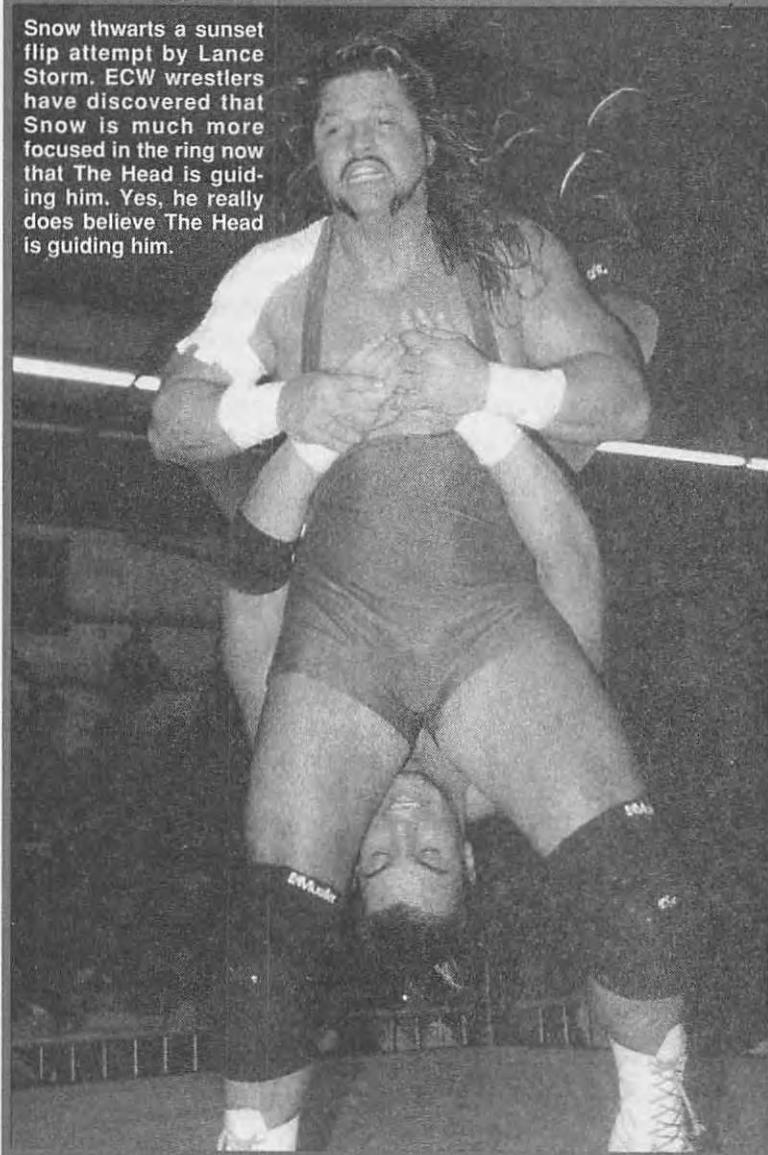
—Elizabeth Drew (1887-1965),
Anglo-American author, critic

AL SNOW HAS spent the past 15 years plying his trade as a professional wrestler. He has spent about the same amount of time fighting his personal demons of frustration.

It took 10 years for Snow to finally get the opportunity to wrestle under the bright spotlight of a

Heated discussions between Al Snow and The Head don't resemble the Lincoln-Douglas debates, but they are interesting nonetheless. Unfortunately for Snow, The Head usually has the last word.

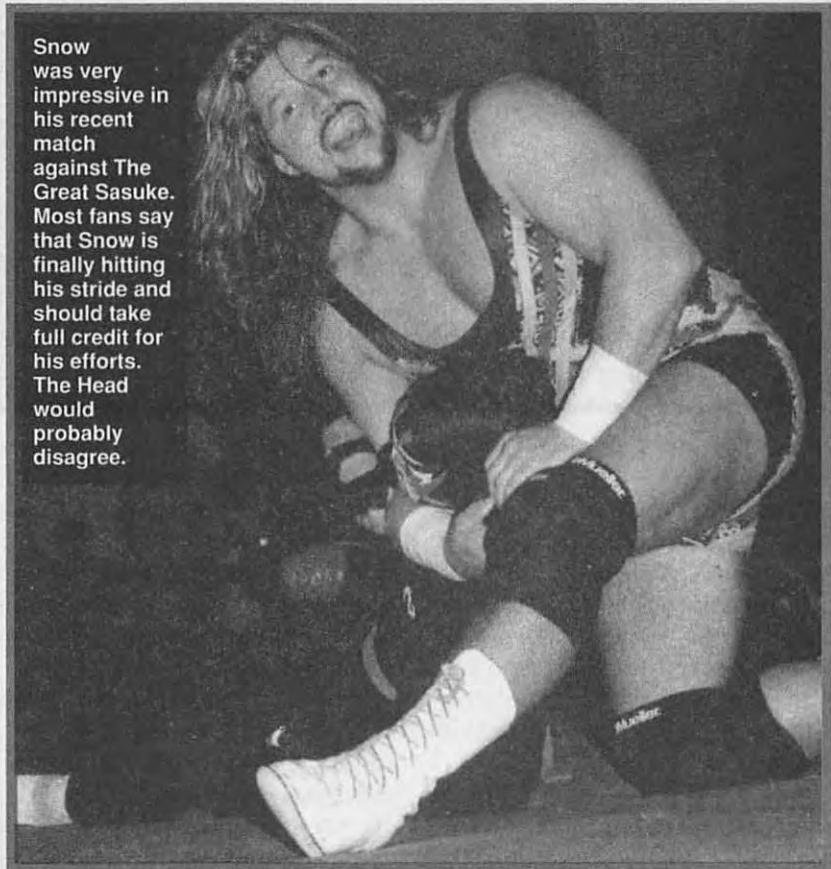
Snow thwarts a sunset flip attempt by Lance Storm. ECW wrestlers have discovered that Snow is much more focused in the ring now that The Head is guiding him. Yes, he really does believe The Head is guiding him.

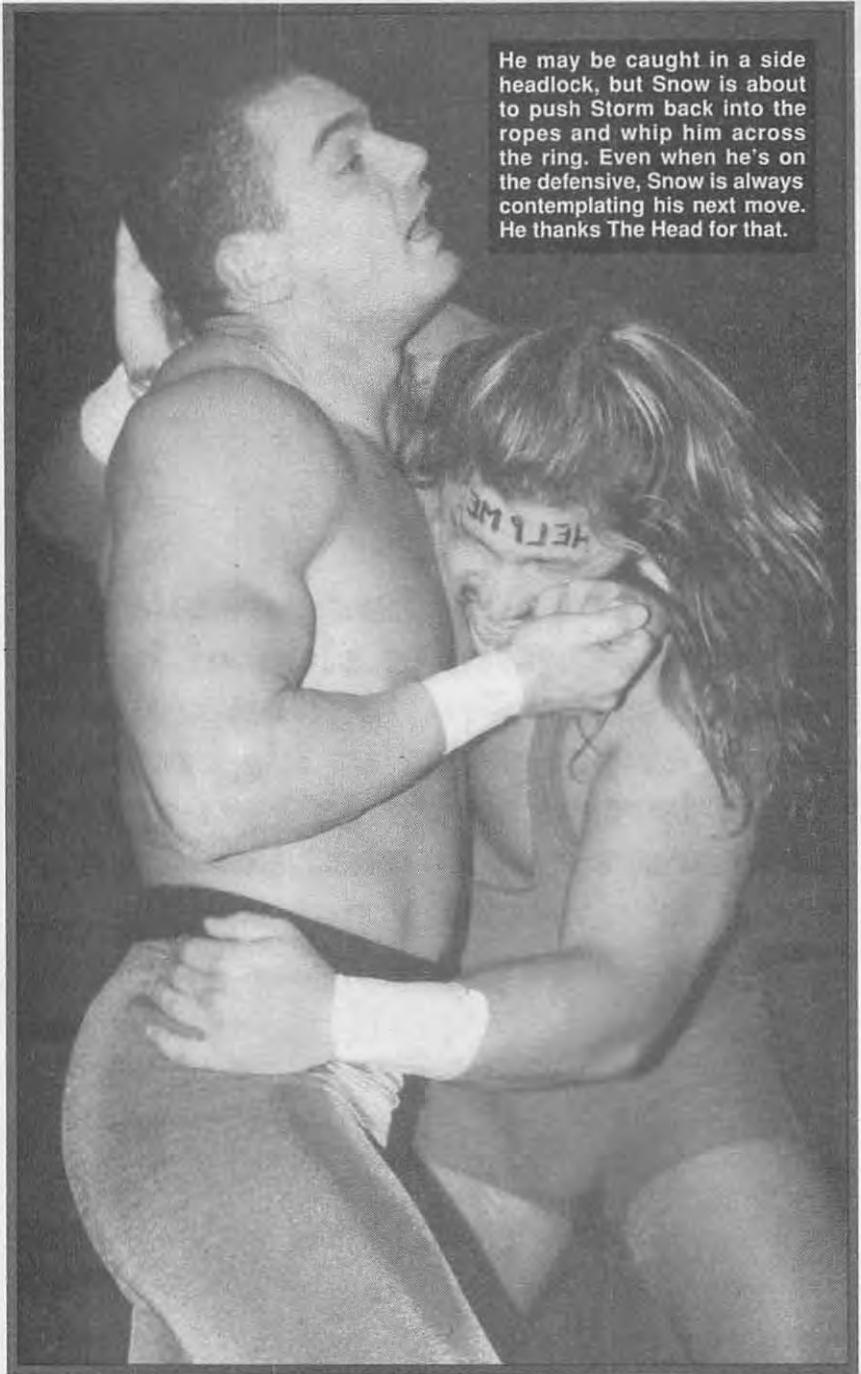


AL SNOW'S NEW BEGINNING: HOW TO GET A HEAD IN WRESTLING

Lately, Al Snow has unveiled a rather unstable side of his personality. Frustration over a lack of progress in his career has forced Snow to resort to desperate measures. Losing his Head is obviously not an option

Snow was very impressive in his recent match against The Great Sasuke. Most fans say that Snow is finally hitting his stride and should take full credit for his efforts. The Head would probably disagree.





He may be caught in a side headlock, but Snow is about to push Storm back into the ropes and whip him across the ring. Even when he's on the defensive, Snow is always contemplating his next move. He thanks The Head for that.

major promotion: the WWF. Then he spent years making a name—er, names—for himself. In fact, you may know a couple of them: Avatar and Leif Cassidy.

"I just thought that if I could prove myself, it didn't matter what name I used," recalled Snow. "I knew that with talent, determination, and direction, the real Al Snow would emerge."

Ironically, Al Snow did not emerge until, after a forgettable stint in the WWF, he went back to

Extreme Championship Wrestling just last year. There he didn't need to try to portray himself as a mysterious warrior or a Rocker. His own name would do just fine. He still had the talent and determination, but the third vital ingredient was missing.

"I have worked my entire career trying to achieve my goals and sometimes I've come up short," said Snow. "But I think I've found the missing ingredient now. I have found the direction and the guid-

ance that I have lacked for so long."

Sounds reasonable enough so far, right?

Most wrestlers in Snow's predicament would have hired a manager to guide their foundering careers. But Snow is not your ordinary wrestler. Years of frustration have worn on his psyche. His mental state has grown more and more unstable. No, Snow did not find himself a manager. He found himself a head.

Not just a head. *The Head*.

Al Snow, the man who was not interested in false monikers and just wanted to be himself for so long, now comes to ECW rings toting *The Head*, which is nothing more than a displaced mannequin head.

"For quite a while now, I thought I heard these voices in my head," he explained. "They were voices that were critiquing my wrestling. Voices that were leading me. I realized that those voices were not coming from my head. They were coming from *The Head*."

What?

According to Snow, *The Head* is not just the voice of one person. There are multiple personalities residing in this "guiding light" encased in plastic. There are voices that provide different advice and points of view. But just because he has the guidance of *The Head* does not mean all is wonderful in the fragile psyche of Al Snow. Publicly, Snow and *The Head* have gotten into some animated discussions.

"*The Head* can't stand me. He hates me and just wants to get away from me," said Snow. "But *The Head* is able to explain things that I just can't understand on my own."

The rancorous debates between Snow and *The Head* revolve around the basic issue of control. While Snow believes *The Head* has led him in the right direction thus far, he still wants to

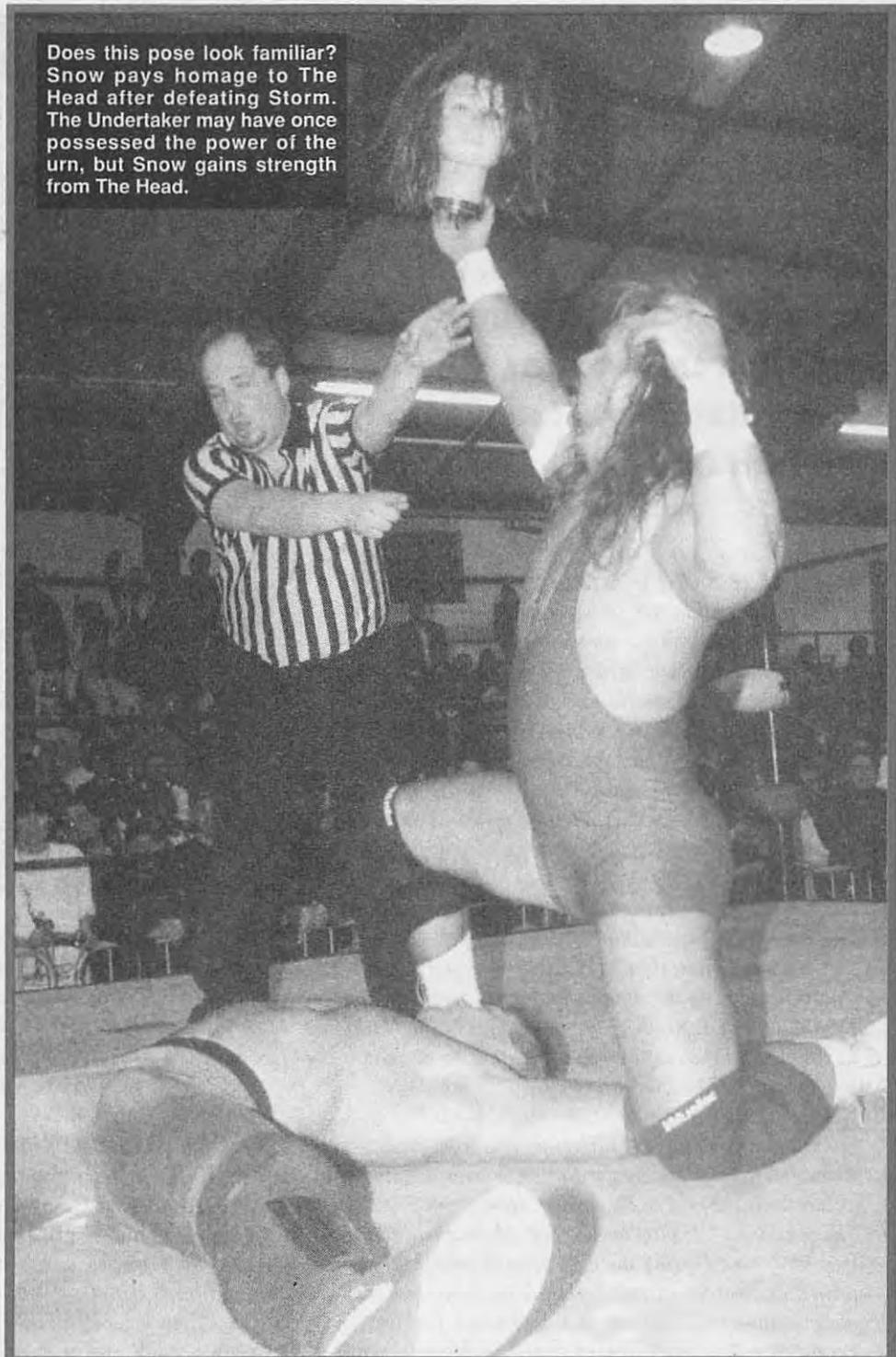
chart the course of his career himself—just as he has done over the past 15 years. "The Head wants *total* control of me," he said. "We constantly argue about that. It's a focal point of our disagreements and a constant struggle. In the end, I always relinquish control to The Head. It's very persuasive and has not steered me wrong yet."

Many feel ECW is long overdue when it comes to providing psychological evaluations for its wrestlers. However, with Snow's mental deterioration, he may be beyond the point at which evaluation or analysis would help. Snow hears the jeers as clearly as he hears the many voices of The Head. "I know that The Head is not alive," he said. "I believe in my heart that it is not alive. But The Head is part of me and I am part of The Head. We are hopelessly intertwined. We are destined to rise together or fall together."

Just as ECW has its own unique brand of wrestlers, the promotion also has its own collection of fans. A wrestler who speaks to a mannequin head receives more approval from hardcore fans than anyone else. They do not shy away from a man like Snow with his trusty Head—they embrace him as one of their own.

For example, at the ECW Arena recently, Snow was set to wrestle yet another match under the guidance of The Head. In a strange attempt to show their approval of Snow's bizarre antics, they showered the ring with nearly

Does this pose look familiar? Snow pays homage to The Head after defeating Storm. The Undertaker may have once possessed the power of the urn, but Snow gains strength from The Head.



1,000 styrofoam heads (which were handed out by The Blue Meanie before the show) after Snow requested it. Various chants relating to The Head are now heard wherever Snow wrestles.

Snow is not sure what to think of this outpouring of support for The Head.

"I still wrestle the same. I just

have more focus," he said. "I think the fans feel that it's all a big joke. What they don't understand is that I take my career very seriously. Whatever help I can get, I'll take it. No matter who it is and no matter where it comes from."

Sounds like Al Snow may have a good Head on his shoulders ... whether he wants it or not. □

The telephone wires sizzle each month, as two top wrestlers voice their rage and hostility toward each other. Here's the unedited transcript of their conversation, your chance to feel the raw emotion that results when two antagonists face off ...

One On One

THREE'S ONLY ONE leader of *The Nation of Domination*. Or so it seemed. Faarooq was the man who ran the show. When the Nation failed, it was his fault. When it succeeded, he took the credit. Who joined the Nation? Who was thrown out? One man made those decisions: Faarooq.

But not anymore. Not since Rocky Maivia won the WWF Intercontinental title. Then again, "won" is too strong a word. Maivia had the title forfeited to him by Steve Austin. The thing is, becoming champion, by any means necessary, went right to Maivia's head and made him think he was the driving force behind *The Nation of Domination*.

On some issues, though, Maivia deferred to Faarooq, such as the time he announced on *Raw* that Ken Shamrock would wrestle the leader of the Nation ... Faarooq. Faarooq wasn't too happy about that, but he wrestled anyway and lost.

Then there was the tag team match when Shamrock teamed with Mark Henry, who he had saved from an attack by the Nation a week earlier, against Maivia and D-Lo Brown. Henry wore a "Rocky Sucks" T-shirt to the ring. Maivia vowed to tear it off him. During the match, however, Henry turned against Shamrock and attacked him. Maivia did eventually tear off the "Rocky Sucks" T-shirt, revealing a *Nation of Domination* T-shirt underneath. When Maivia walked back to the locker room, he was confronted by Faarooq, who wanted to know when he got the authority to enlist Henry as an NOD member. But according to Maivia, he didn't need permission.

The indications are clear: Maivia and Faarooq are headed in different directions. What's less clear is where they're going, and whether it will be Faarooq or Maivia heading *The Nation of Domination*. In our view, there was only one way to find out, by getting them together via phone hookup ... "One On One."

ONE O



"I'm the man who everybody else is going to be measured against. And *The Nation of Domination*, my *Nation of Domination*, with 'The Rock' in control, is the organization by which all others will be measured."

—Rocky Maivia

ROCKY MAIVIA: What's up, underling?

FAAROOQ: Who you calling an underling, Rocky? I built *The Nation of Domination* from the ground up. It's mine and when I'm gone, it's gone. There's only one *Nation of Domination*, and that's my *Nation of Domination*.

RM: Then it looks to me, Faarooq, like you've got me between a rock and a hard place, so to speak. I don't want the old *Nation of Domination*. That never won anything. I want this new *Nation of Domination*, and this new *Nation of Domination* started when "The Rock" became the WWF Intercontinental champion—the best damn Intercontinental champion there ever was, by the way.

F: Big deal. Look in the mirror. How'd you win that title? Wait a minute ... you didn't win the title. It was handed to you, and that was the only way you were going to get it. Besides, Austin had other things to worry about. He didn't want to worry about you and the

N ONE



"Sounds to me like you've gone a little crazy ... You can't do anything for the Nation. Faarooq is the Nation. The only reason you're in the Nation is because I gave you the chance of a lifetime."

—Faarooq

Intercontinental belt anymore.

RM: Other things? Who writes your material, man? What is wrong with you? He wanted that belt. He just didn't have the guts to defend it against me again that night. He knew I was going to go after that bad neck of his and do some permanent damage.

F: Yeah, and I see he didn't have any guts at the Royal Rumble, either. Looks to me like he handled you pretty well ...

RM: Looks to me like "The Rock" was one of the first men into the ring and almost the last man out of the ring ...

F: Almost, Rocky, but not quite. Almost don't count in this sport. It'll get you nothing ...

RM: Yeah, which is exactly what The Nation of Domination had until "The Rock" came along. Nothing. *Nada*. And you know what *nada* means? It means *nada* thing.

F: Go ahead, Maivia. You think you're a leader? Go

lead. Lead D-Lo Brown, Kama Mustafa, and that Mark Henry that you brought into the mix. Mark Henry. You call him Nation of Domination material? Well, maybe in the new Nation of Domination, the losing Nation of Domination, the Nation of Domination that don't stand a chance until I'm in control. Let me tell you something, Maivia. The Nation of Domination doesn't exist without me. I'm the one in control ...

RM: Well, if that's the case, then how come D-Lo, Kama, and Henry are following me, not you, Faarooq?

F: We'll see who they're following. And if they're following you, we'll see exactly where they're following you. To ruin, that's where.

RM: Right, and you're a good example, fool. Couldn't beat Shamrock. You were scared of Shamrock, man! You would've run away from him if you had the chance, but I put you to the test, and you knew you couldn't back down. But you know what? You failed the test. You failed big-time. Zero. No score. You were nothing. And look at what "The Rock" did against Shamrock! He came after me, and I beat him at the Royal Rumble. So now we know you can't lead, you can't even keep what you once had. And you saw what happened at the Rumble ...

F: Yeah, you lost.

RM: No, fool, I won, and everybody knows it. I showed everybody what "The Rock" is made of. They used to talk about Shawn Michaels being the iron man. Well, now I'm the iron man of the WWF. I'm the man who everybody else is going to be measured against. And The Nation of Domination, my Nation of Domination, with "The Rock" in control, is the organization by which all others will be measured. That includes the old Nation of Domination, with you in charge, and DeGeneration X, and anyone else out there, because the Nation of Domination is the new wave in wrestling, the new Nation, the new domination.

F: Sounds to me like you've gone a little crazy. You know what they say, you can't make chicken salad ...

RM: Say it man, say it ...

F: No, I'm not gonna say it. You know what I mean. The Nation of Domination was a growing organization, the fastest-growing organization in wrestling, and that's the way it'll still be if you just go back where you came from, crawl back under your rock ...

RM: Yeah, man, good joke. I get it. Crawl back under your rock ...

F: And keep your damn mouth shut. Men like Mark Henry can't do anything for the Nation. You can't do anything for the Nation. Faarooq is the Nation. The only reason you're in the Nation is because I gave you the chance of a lifetime. Without Faarooq, there is no Nation. And that's the end of that story.

RM: No, fool, that's the end of your story. That's the end of Faarooq's Nation of Domination. Now it's "The Rock's" Nation of Domination. And it's stronger than ever. □

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Sincerely Yours

(Continued from page 5)

was the dumbest thing Disco Inferno could have done, but I guess he's still learning. It just proves that he isn't ready to be a champion yet.

I would also like to take exception to the comments of Glacier and Chris Benoit, who make it sound as if Disco Inferno is some sort of valiant warrior. Not only is beating a woman a less-than-noble act, it was dumb of Disco to put himself in a no-win situation to begin with. Disco Inferno was the victim of his own pride, and it cost him the title.

WILLIAM MORRISON

Waterloo, IA

GREETINGS FROM TENNESSEE

I'm glad the plight of Tennessee wrestling finally got some much

needed media attention ("On The Road," March 1998). For decades, independent promotions in and around Tennessee have turned out top-flight competitors who eventually migrate to the larger federations. Rarely do these wrestlers kick back anything to help keep the fledgling organizations afloat.

Even though a lot of the talent drifts away, along with the glamour and the money, the passion remains in Tennessee.

WAYNE WYATT

Clinton, TN

COFFEE TALK

What's the matter with Shawn Michaels and Ken Shamrock? They showed way too much respect for each other in March's "One On One."

We all know Michaels is a jerk, and once again he didn't disappoint readers, but he gave Shamrock way too much credit for being UFC champion. The same goes for Shamrock, who told Michaels he respects him as an athlete, not as a man.

What's with these guys? Is this a kinder, gentler WWF? I expected a little more from these two. What happened to the intensity and fiery tempers these two maniacs are so famous for?

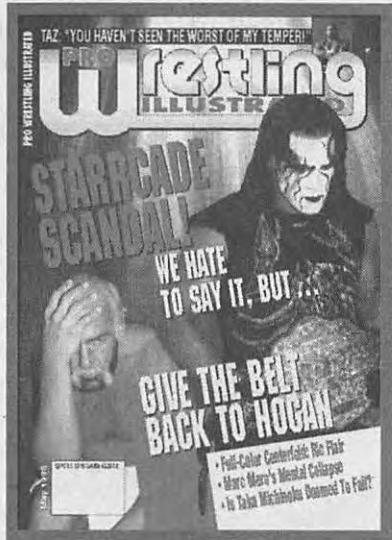
Normally, "One On One" is a knock-down, drag-'em-out verbal exchange. Shamrock vs. Michaels sounded more like a coffee clutch.

ANTHONY DORIELLO
Flint, MI □



Shawn Michaels and Ken Shamrock have had a few intense matches during the last few months, but reader Anthony Doriello didn't like their verbal exchange in "One On One."

This Month In...



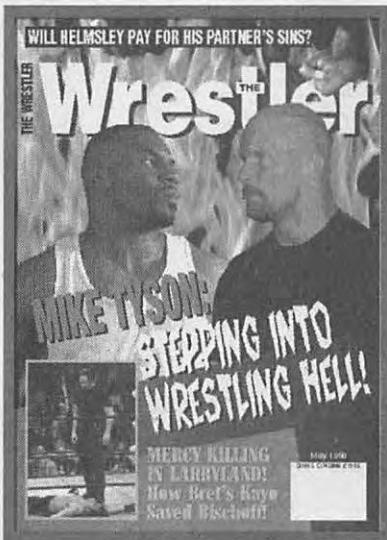
It pains us greatly to have to say this, but if you look at what happened at Starrcade objectively, you might agree that it's the right thing to do: Give the WCW belt back to **HULK HOGAN!** ... You won't want to miss our match-by-match rundown of Starrcade and our analysis of how it reshaped the WCW-NWO war ... Were you surprised to see **MARC MERO**'s demeanor change a few months ago? **BILL APTER** wasn't. He saw it coming after Mero accused his son of "looking at Sable" way back in 1996! ... Check out our full-color centerfold of

RIC FLAIR

All this—and much more—in the May 1998 issue of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated*

NOW ON SALE!

The Wrestler



MIKE TYSON has been a wrestling fan for a long time, so when he was offered the opportunity to be part of WrestleMania XIV, he was thrilled. But does he really know what he's getting into? ... ERIC BISCHOFF was lucky to survive the brutal thrashing he got from LARRY ZBYSZKO. For that, he should thank BRET HART. The "Hitman's" kayo brought a merciful end to the slaughter ... DEGENERATION X may seem unstoppable now, but a few wrestlers think they've found a way to end the juvenile onslaught—by eliminating the "weak link,"

HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY

All this—and much more—in the May 1998 issue of *The Wrestler*

NOW ON SALE!

On The Road

(Continued from page 10)

Back in 1989, the Steiners argued over Woman (then known as Robin Green). Rick liked her, while Scott wanted nothing to do with her. The conflict they're having now could be a lot more serious.



there, but nothing we can't overcome. I just don't understand it. I was a little late for a match."

"A tag team title defense."

"Okay, fine. A tag team title defense. What's the big deal?"

"Well, it would've been a big deal if you lost the belts that night. Rick had to take on Norton and Vincent by himself."

"Right. And he handled himself fine ..."

"And he almost got beaten up afterward."

"Yeah, and who saved him?"

"You."

"Correct. Case closed. Now let's eat."

Later, at the same restaurant, I noticed that Rick ordered the exact same crab cakes appetizer. He also ordered the same main course as Scott had hours earlier: the pasta special with pepper-

encrusted tuna. He also asked the same opening question.

"Okay, whaddya wanna know?" Rick said as he cut into his crab cakes.

"Well, Scott says there's nothing going on between you two."

"Nothing going on? What should be going on?"

"Well, he was late for a match, then you got mad at him for that ..."

"I had a right to get mad. It was bad news. He shoulda been there."

"Then, in the next few matches, he refused to tag out."

"And that was bad. But those things happen ..."

"Between brothers?"

"Between tag team partners. Remember, we're tag team partners in the ring, brothers outside the ring. And sometimes tag team partners have differences. But as

brothers, we have no differences."

"None at all?"

"As brothers, no. As tag team partners, maybe. But we'll work things out."

"Ted DiBiase says you don't stop arguing."

"That was one time. Maybe two. Or three. No big deal. Now let's eat."

Throughout the meal, I tried to bring up the subject several times, but Rick didn't want to talk about his brother. The next day, before leaving for the airport, I ran into Scott outside my hotel.

"Still here?" Scott asked.

"Obviously," I said.

"Well, maybe you'd better stick around. Big things are about to happen."

"Big things? Like what?"

"Can't say," Scott said, smirking. "But you'll see." □

Behind the Door

(Continued from page 12)

his outrageous behavior and cross-dressing—is obviously nothing more than a way for him to display his deep-seated resentment toward his father. But I don't want to get into that. It's a family problem. Private stuff. That's not what this column is about.

Here's what this is all about: If he can be The Artist Formerly Known As Goldust, why can't I be The Writer Formerly Known

As Rosenbaum (TWFKAR)? I can cross-write my columns. Next month's "Behind The Dressing Room Door" will be written as if Brandi Mankiewicz wrote it. Or maybe Dave Lenker could be The Editor Formerly Known As Lenker (TEFKAL) and next month's "On The Road" could be written by me.

This is all totally ridiculous and doesn't make a bit of sense, just

like Goldust's behavior doesn't make a bit of sense. I mean, here he is, stuck in a feud with Vader, one of the most dangerous men in the world, and all Goldust can think about is what to wear. If Goldust spent half as much time studying tapes and working out as he does choosing clothes, he'd be the WWF World champion.

By the way, Goldy, those coconuts were way too big.

Well, enough of this. In fact, enough of Goldust until next year at least. I'm tired of writing about him. From now on, this column will be known as "The Column Formerly About Goldust." And I'm going to South Beach. □



With a 450-pound madman like Vader after him, TAFKAG would be better off spending more time in the gym and less time in Bloomingdale's. Rosenbaum has sworn off writing about TAFKAG for a while.

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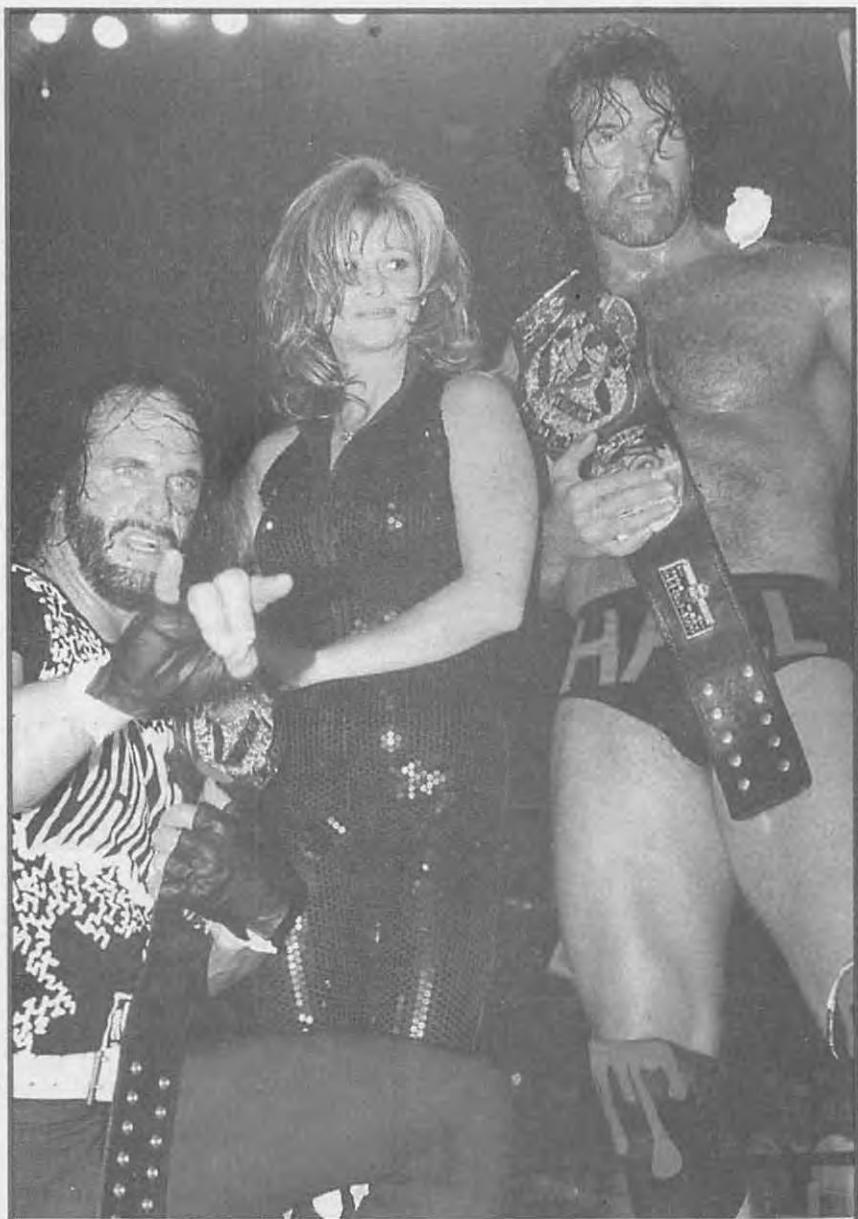
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The Insider

(Continued from page 14)



No stranger to controversy, Scott Hall is now in the middle of the Kevin Nash-Randy Savage feud. Hall teams with Nash, yet he often travels with Savage. Let's work these problems out, guys!

taped *Raw* had higher ratings during the last hour in which the shows went head-to-head) and the first *Souled Out* as proof positive that it isn't just Hogan and company accounting for the rising number of viewers. But there are two theories that debunk that notion.

Think of the NWO as a *Saturday Night Live* skit that is turned

into a movie. It's easy to take the stuff in five-to-10-minute doses, but over the course of two hours, it gets a bit hard to watch. Secondly, the NWO is an admitted outsider group. These guys are at their most watchable when they're ruining the show, not running it.

Therefore WCW can ill afford to destroy the NWO's infrastructure.

The WWF has enjoyed improved ratings in recent months and is still drawing large crowds to non-televised arena shows. Dare I say they're catching up? Whether anyone likes it or not, just as the NWO members need WCW to provide them with a forum in which they can be obnoxious bullies, WCW needs them, because their fans cannot get enough of those obnoxious bullies.

Neither can I. For me, the NWO represents a kind of organized chaos that had not been seen in years. You have an evil ex-hero, federation head, and (sometimes) a referee. You have the good guy federation that wouldn't know unity if it drop-kicked it in the chin. You have the leader of that group, J.J. Dillon (an ex-manager who busted more than a few rules in his career), decreeing that WCW wrestlers would be fined if they violated rules and, by the way, the same goes for the NWO. Once again, as is their custom, the fan favorite group comes up short.

As the NWO goes, so goes the success of WCW, and vice versa. The two organizations are involuntarily intertwined. The success of one depends on the success of the other. I am not calling for Glasnost. I am saying that the two should just continue bickering and fighting *with each other*.

This is not a plea for the two to start working together. I don't want to see Hulk and Sting hug or J.J. and Eric going to Braves games together. Peaceful co-existence will either put me and everyone else to sleep or wear out clickers throughout the world.

All I'm asking for is unpeaceful co-existence, organized chaos, and anarchy, anarchy, anarchy. Can't we all just *not* get along? □

On Assignment

(Continued from page 16)

building, but The Honky Tonk Man has returned."

"Liz, Honky Tonk. Forgot to ask you: How did my hair look on TV? I know it looked good, but I wanted to get the point of view from the fairer persuasion."

"Liz. Honk. Is that machine of yours broken or something? Why

won't you return the calls of The Honky Tonk Man? Why wouldn't you return the calls of the greatest Intercontinental champion of all-time?"

"Liz. Honky. I just want to let you know that if you don't start returning my calls, you won't get the exclusive interview with The

Honky Tonk Man—the greatest Intercontinental champion of all-time—when I win the WWF World heavyweight title. I want you to be there with me, darlin', as I shake, rattle, and roll my way to the very top."

Those were just a little more than half the messages. The others were brief, not as exciting, and just as repetitive. More blather about the greatest this and that. One time he had my number confused with that of his hairstylist and berated my machine for what he perceived to be his uneven pompadour.

So I decided to be a professional and return his numerous calls. What did I get for my efforts? Honky's answering machine. It went something like this:

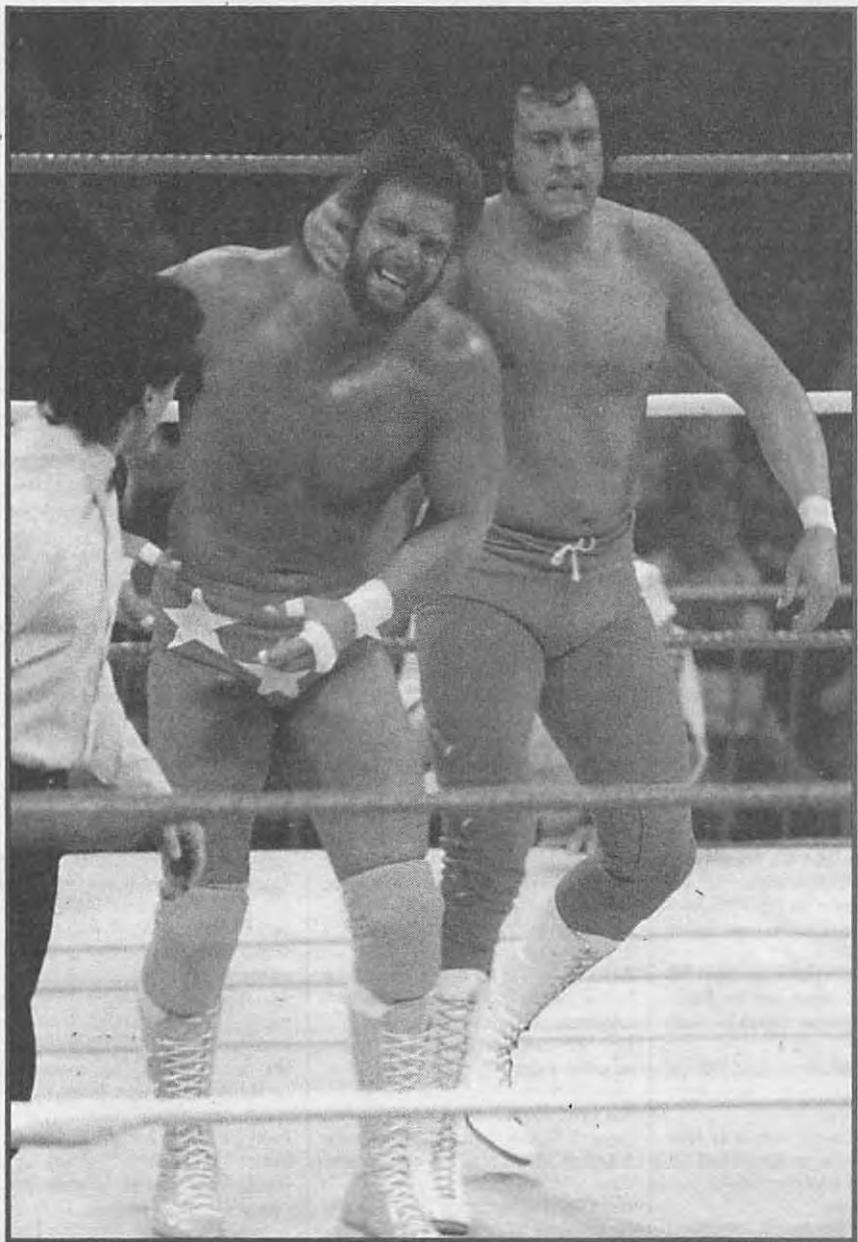
"Hello. You have reached the estate of The Honky Tonk Man—the greatest singer, dancer, wrestler, and of course, the greatest Intercontinental champion of all-time. Please leave a message after the short sample of The Honky Tonk Man's greatest hits. I'll call you back as soon as 'Cilla stops crawling all over me."

After a beep that literally played his hits, I left this message:

"Honk. Liz. Returning your calls. Really wanted to talk to The Honky Tonk Man, the greatest Intercontinental champion of all-time. Give me a call. We'll do that interview. Bye. Oh, by the way, your hair looked strange on television."

I just love messing with his mind. Although I think a certain hairstylist will soon be looking for work.

Hanging up the phone, I found myself hoping that HTM would win the World belt. If anything, just so I don't ever have to hear how he is the "greatest Intercontinental ..." Well, you know how it goes. □



The Honky Tonk Man was considered a serious contender to the WWF World title when he was battling Randy Savage back in the 1980s. As for now, well, things have changed a lot.

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March 1993: Who Controls The Balance Of Power In The WWF? Also: Shawn Michaels, Nikita Koloff, Windham-Dustin, Survivor Series, Rod Price.

April 1993: New Blood! The Wrestlers Who Could Revitalize The WWF In '93. Plus: Z-Man & Gunn, Sting-Vader, Dangerous Alliance, Ric Flair.

May 1993: Exclusive WrestleMania IX Match Analysis. Also: Andre the Giant, Pillman & Austin, Great Muta, Headshrinkers-Steiners, 2 Cold Scorpio.

July 1993: Davey Boy Smith Dogs Big Von Vader: Could Bret Hart Be Next? Plus: Dino Bravo, Giant Gonzales, Razor Ramon, Arn Anderson, Dustin-Cactus-Rude, Tatanka.

August 1993: Hulk Hogan vs. Yokozuna: The "Hulkster" Faces His Biggest Challenge Ever! Plus: Jeff Jarrett, Maxx Payne, Sid Vicious, Cactus-Vader, Bret Hart.

November 1993: Flair ("I'm The Man Again!) vs. Rude ("You Mean You Were The Man."):

Plus: Heavenly Bodies, Marty Jannetty, Rude-Flair, Hulk Hogan, Vader & Vicious, Lex Luger.

December 1993: "The Next Hulk Hogan": Why Lex Luger Will Succeed Where Warrior And Savage Failed. Plus: Tammy Fitch, Steve Austin, Yokozuna, Sting & Flair, Titus Santanna, Luna Vachon.

January 1994 (Special Issue): Wrestling's Seasonal Spectacular! WWF's SummerSlam, WCW's Fall Brawl. Plus: Rick Martel, Missy Hyatt, Razor-Schyster, Steven Regal, Orndorff-Flair, Mascaras-Liger.

February 1994: Our Holiday Wish List For 1994. Plus: Hogan-Savage-Bret, Hacksaw Duggan, Doink, Hollywood Blonds, Steven Regal.

March 1994: Inside Wrestling Predicts: What's In Store For '94. Plus: Nastys & Misys, Col. Parker, Ludvig Borga, chairs, Survivor Series, Diesel-Michaels.

April 1994 (Special Issue): The Inside Wrestling Computer Tournament. Also: Lex Luger, Starrcade, Yoko-Fuji, Ric Flair, Curt Hennig, Funk-Sabu.

May 1994: Lex Luger & Bret Hart: Their Greatest Triumphs, Their Gravest Tragedies. Also: Flair-Rude, Rick Morton, Heenan-Bockwinkel, Brian Christopher, Yoko-Booger.

June 1994: Wake Up, Rick Steamboat: Ric Flair Is Still "Slick" Ric! Also: Jimmy Snuka, Tony Anthony, IRS, Bruise Brothers, Alundra Blayze, Freebirds.

July 1994 (Special Issue): A Look Into Wrestling's Future: You Won't Believe What You'll See! Also: Ron Simmons, Sting, Earthquake-Booger, Bob Armstrong, Diesel.

August 1994: 10 Years After Rock 'n' Wrestling: It's Time For Roddy To Get Rowdy Again! Also: Hulk Hogan, 911, Freebirds, rulebreakers, Cornette & Bodies, Bushwhackers.

September 1994: The Resurrection Of The Undertaker. Also: Nastys-Cactus & Maxx, Flair-Steamboat, Nikolai Volkoff, Rock 'n' Rolls, Luna Vachon.

October 1994 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: Doink, Vader-Race, Mabel, Dory Funk Jr., Owen-Bret, Hall of Fame.

December 1994: Hogan In Paradise ... And Ric Flair Feels The Thunder. Also: Bret-Owen, Rattens, Cactus, AAA midgets, Sparky Plugg, Donn E. Allen.

February 1995: It's Getting Ugly: Wrestling's Losing Its Greatest Heroes. Also: Sting, McMahon-Lawler, Cactus-Tammy, Woman, Brutus-Hogan, Valentine-Doink.

March 1995: Predictions 1995. Also: Nastys, Razor Ramon, Tasmania, Kid-Man O'-War, Pillman & Hogan.

April 1995 (Special Issue): The 1995 Inside Wrestling Computer Tournament. Also: Diesel,

Vader-Austin, Lex Luger, Jerry Lawler, Johnny B. Badd, Al Snow.

June 1995: The Beginning Of The End? Will Hulk Hogan Get Burned By Friendly Fire? Also: Steve Austin, Gangstas, Public Enemy, Bret-Owen, Jeff Jarrett.

July 1995 (Special Issue): Wrestling Cool!!! What's In—And Why—in The Mat Sport Today. Also: Savage & Sting, Alex Wright, Bruise Brothers, Dan Severn, Ivan Putski.

August 1995: The Untold Truth: WrestleMania X—The Winners And Losers. Also: Johnny B. Badd, Bam Bam Bigelow, John Studd, Bubba-Sting.

October 1995 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: Randy Savage, Bret & Cactus, Sting, Diesel, Hawk.

November 1995: One Defense In Four Months?! Strip Hulk Hogan Of The Title—Now!

Also: Alex Wright, Tatanka, King of Ring, Chris Benoit, Backlund-Clinton.

December 1995: White With Fright, Green With Envy: Why The Undertaker Had To Bury Kama.

Also: Vader-Hogan, Warrior-Renegade, Gangstas-PE, Waylon Mercy, Heavenly Bodies.

January 1996: Our Holiday Wish List For 1996!

Also: Scott Norton, Sid Vicious, Psicosis-Misterio, Barry Horowitz, Sabu.

February 1996: Wrestling's Top Stars: What 1996 Has In Store For Them! Also: Goldust, Sherri-Parker, Mikey Whipwreck, Smokin' Gunn.

March 1996: His Excellency! How Bret Masterminded Diesel's Execution. Also: Jeff Jarrett, Giant, Jim Cornette, Survivor Series, Eddy Guerrero.

April 1996 (Special Issue): The 1996 Inside Wrestling Computer Tournament. Also: Bret-Ultimate, Four Horsemen, British Bulldog, Randy Savage, Sabu.

May 1996: Ready ... Aim ... Maint! The Sick Race To Cripple Shawn Michaels. Also: Shane Douglas, Arn Anderson, Jerry Lawler, Hogan-Flair.

June 1996: Luger Or Hogan? If Sting Makes The Wrong Choice, He's Through! Also: Road Warriors, Roddy Piper, Ahmed Johnson, Raven, Al Snow

July 1996 (Special Issue): Warrior: Why He'll Save The WWF; Why He'll Sink The WWF. Also: Top stars answer personal questions, Diesel-Hogan, Dallas Page, Bret Hart.

August 1996: The Greening Of Wrestling: How Sting & Shawn Will Become \$50,000,000 Men!

Also: Bodysnappers, Giant, Guerrera-Misterio, George Steele, Goldust & Marlena.

September 1996: She's No Boob! Sunny: More

Than Just Sex Appeal. Also: Lawler-Jarrett, 911, Brian Pillman, Alex Wright, championship chaos.

October 1996 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: Jake Roberts, Yokozuna, Giant-Konnan, Ahmed Johnson, Chris Jericho, strutters.

November 1996: The Steiners: Feasting On A Buffet Of Violence. Also: Shawn Michaels, Sabu-Douglas, King of Ring, Eddy Guerrero, truck stop terror.

December 1996: Three Women For Four Horsemen? The Hot Search For A Fourth Filly Has Begun! Also: Sunny & Gunn, Giant, Goldust, Cornette & Hart, Jerry Jarrett.

Holiday 1996 (Special Issue): The Tombstone: Wrestling's Deadliest Finisher. Also: 1997 calendar, "Psycho" Sid, Benoit-Misterio, Steiners-NWO, Pit Bull I, Justin Liger.

January 1997: Dreaming Of A Sunny Christmas ... Our Holiday Wish List For The Stars. Also: Michaels & Undertaker, Sling, Barry Windham, Farooq, NWNO.

February 1997: Trouble In Egoville: Is There An NWO Within The NWO? Also: Chris Candido, Bret-Shawn, Ric Flair, Joey Styles, Liger-Benoit.

March 1997: Why Bret's Execution Will Be Excellent By WrestleMania Also: Roddy Piper, Syxx, Survivor Series, Steve Austin, talent scouts.

April 1997 (Special Issue): The 1997 Inside Wrestling Computer Tournament. Also: Helmsley-Marlene-Sable, Nasty Boys, Flash Funk, Taz, Rick Steiner.

May 1997: Giant vs. Hogan: "Hey, Little Man, What Ya Gonna Do?" Also: Woman-Benoit-Sullivan, Shawn-Bret, Undertaker, Scott Hall, Sabu.

June 1997: Ahmed Johnson Reveals: "I Almost Joined The Nation Of Domination." Plus: Mankind, Lex Luger, NWO, Davey Boy Smith, Jerry Graham.

July 1997 (Special Issue): House Of Horrors! Fourth World Title Change In '97 ... Can The Undertaker Restore Order? Plus: Stars answer personal questions, Steve McMichael, Road Warriors, Syxx, Sandman-Lori-Tyler.

August 1997: Bret Hart Lashes Out: "You're All Responsible For What I'm About To Do!" Plus: Shawn Michaels, Chyna, Steiners, Sting, Gilbert tourney.

September 1997: The NWO's Anniversary Report. Plus: Lex Luger, Shawn-Bret, Terry Funk, Rob Van Dam, Ken Shamrock.

October 1997 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Plus: LOD-PG-13, Rob Van Dam, Flair & Horsemen, Ken Shamrock, McMichael-White, Madd & Mama Maxxine.

INSIDE WRESTLING

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The Rich-Sawyer B

THE BLOODY FEUD between Tommy Rich and Buzz Sawyer has burst out of its confines. What was a localized squall has escalated into a true hurricane of terror, and is traveling north from its Georgia base into America's heartland.

Like a perverted game of cat and mouse, Rich and Sawyer chase each other from state to state, each swearing to avenge the other's previous victory. What is left for the fans is a trail of vicious, animalistic brawls that bear no resemblance to the sport of professional wrestling.

Fans from Atlanta to Huntington, West Virginia, to Dayton, Ohio, to Lansing, Michigan, have been horrified by

the brutality that prevails in the ring during a Sawyer-Rich contest. They are not only horrified; they are disgusted.

In Huntington, a man walked out of the arena with his three small children, swearing that he'd never let them see or read about either man again.

Marie Romanelli, a fan in her late 20s, stood in the arena lobby during the latter stages of the two wrestlers' most recent contest in Lansing. "I couldn't stand to watch it," she said. "It was like they didn't even know the audience was there. I don't think they would've cared if the arena was empty, as long as they got a chance to beat on each other. It was sick."

Indeed, Rich and Sawyer don't

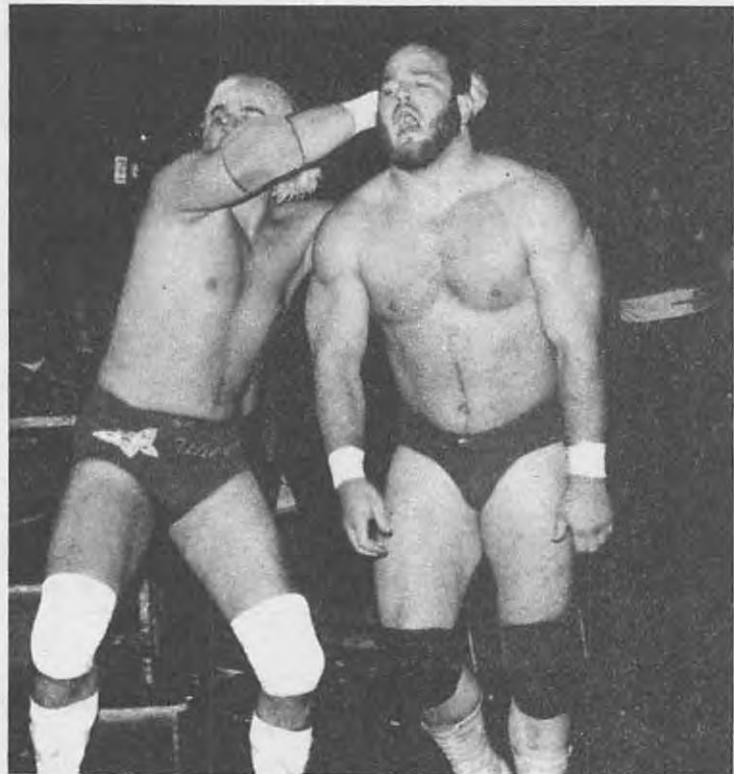
care if the crowd is watching or not. "If I could catch him out on the street, I would," Sawyer said. "But he runs away so well. The only place I can keep him from running is in the ring, and even then I have to lock the pig in a cage sometimes."

Of course, Rich's side of the story is completely different. "He just keeps coming back for more," Tommy said. "Fine with me, man. If he wants his skull busted open like a ripe watermelon again, I'll be more than happy to do it. More than happy."

Meanwhile, the careers of these two wrestlers have been put on hold while they pursue each other. Many fans regret that Rich has

(Continued on page 62)

GEORGIA TERROR ON TOUR



They travel like the circus, but instead of a lion and liontamer in the ring, there are just two lions, ripping and clawing with no regard for each other's lives.

Tommy Rich and Buzz Sawyer are shamelessly exhibiting their most violent tendencies for an entire nation

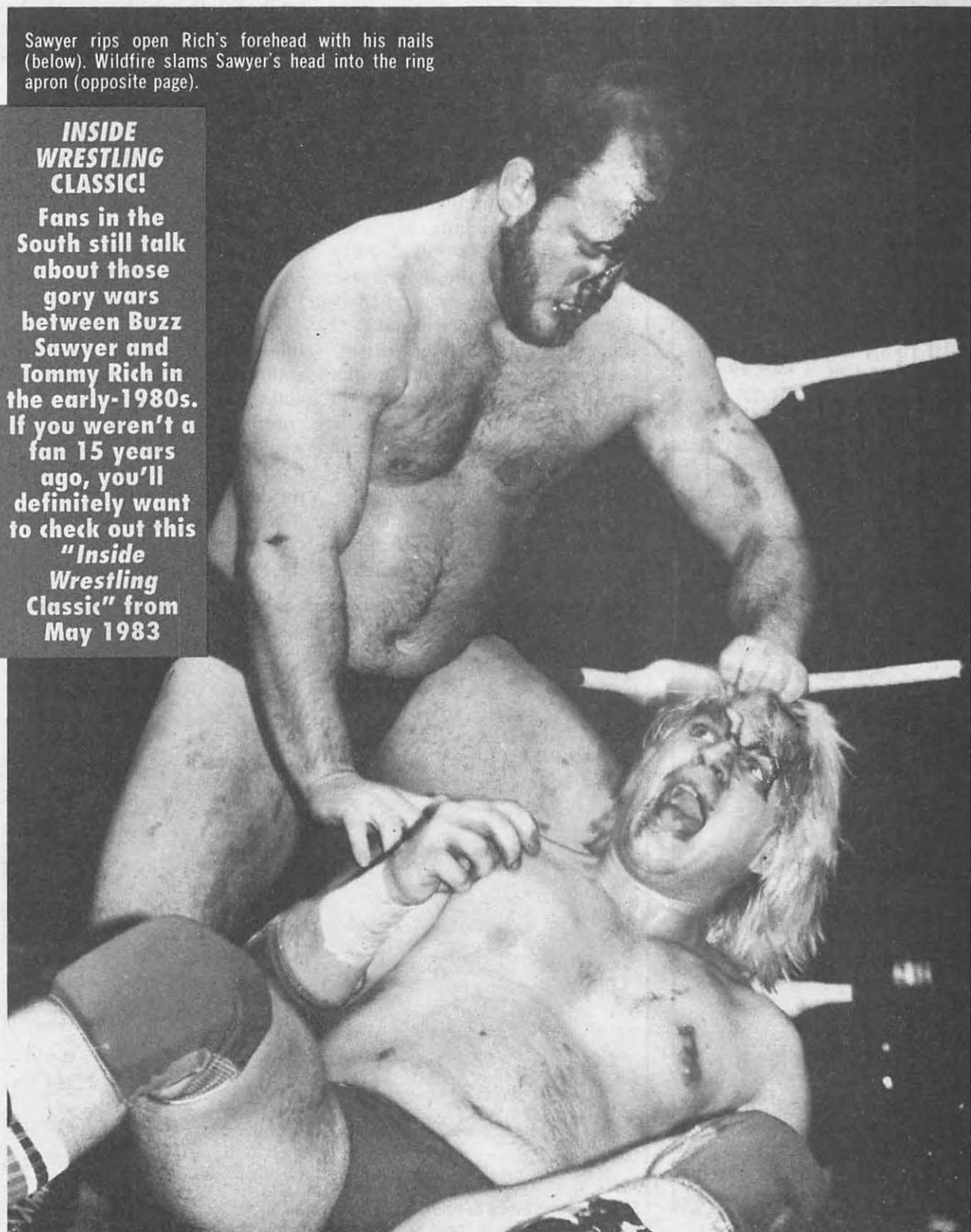
PHOTOS BY BRAD MCFARLIN

loodbath Continues

Sawyer rips open Rich's forehead with his nails (below). Wildfire slams Sawyer's head into the ring apron (opposite page).

INSIDE WRESTLING CLASSIC!

Fans in the South still talk about those gory wars between Buzz Sawyer and Tommy Rich in the early-1980s. If you weren't a fan 15 years ago, you'll definitely want to check out this "Inside Wrestling Classic" from May 1983.



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Rich-Sawyer Bloodbath

(Continued from page 60)

temporarily suspended his quest for Ric Flair's NWA title. In the May 1983 issue of our sister publication *The Wrestler*, Rich was quoted as saying, "I can't give up the campaign, it's simply something I have to do right now."

He continued, "I feel bad because I simply can't stop right now. I know that this disturbs a lot of my fans, and for that I'm sorry."

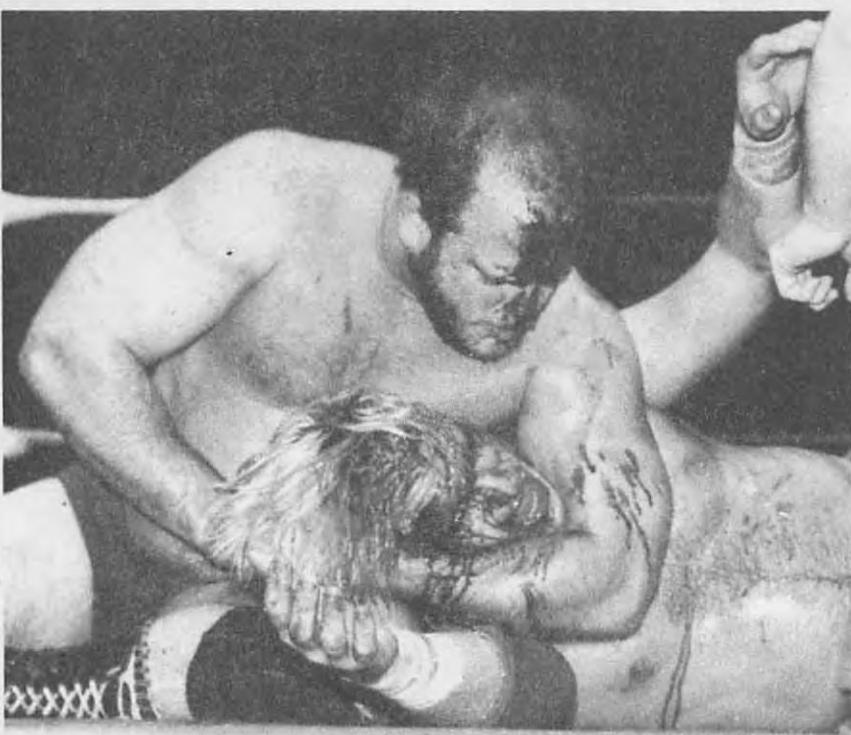
Not only the fans, but even fellow wrestlers who have supported Rich throughout the feud are beginning to think Tommy is making a mistake. "I don't like Buzz Sawyer, either," said Butch Reed, "but I'm not gonna devote my entire career to the elimination of one man. Sawyer's just not worth it. Life goes on, ya know? I have one goal, and that's to be a world champion. I'm working toward my title shot against Ric Flair. If I were Tommy, I'd stop to think if it's worth it

or not."

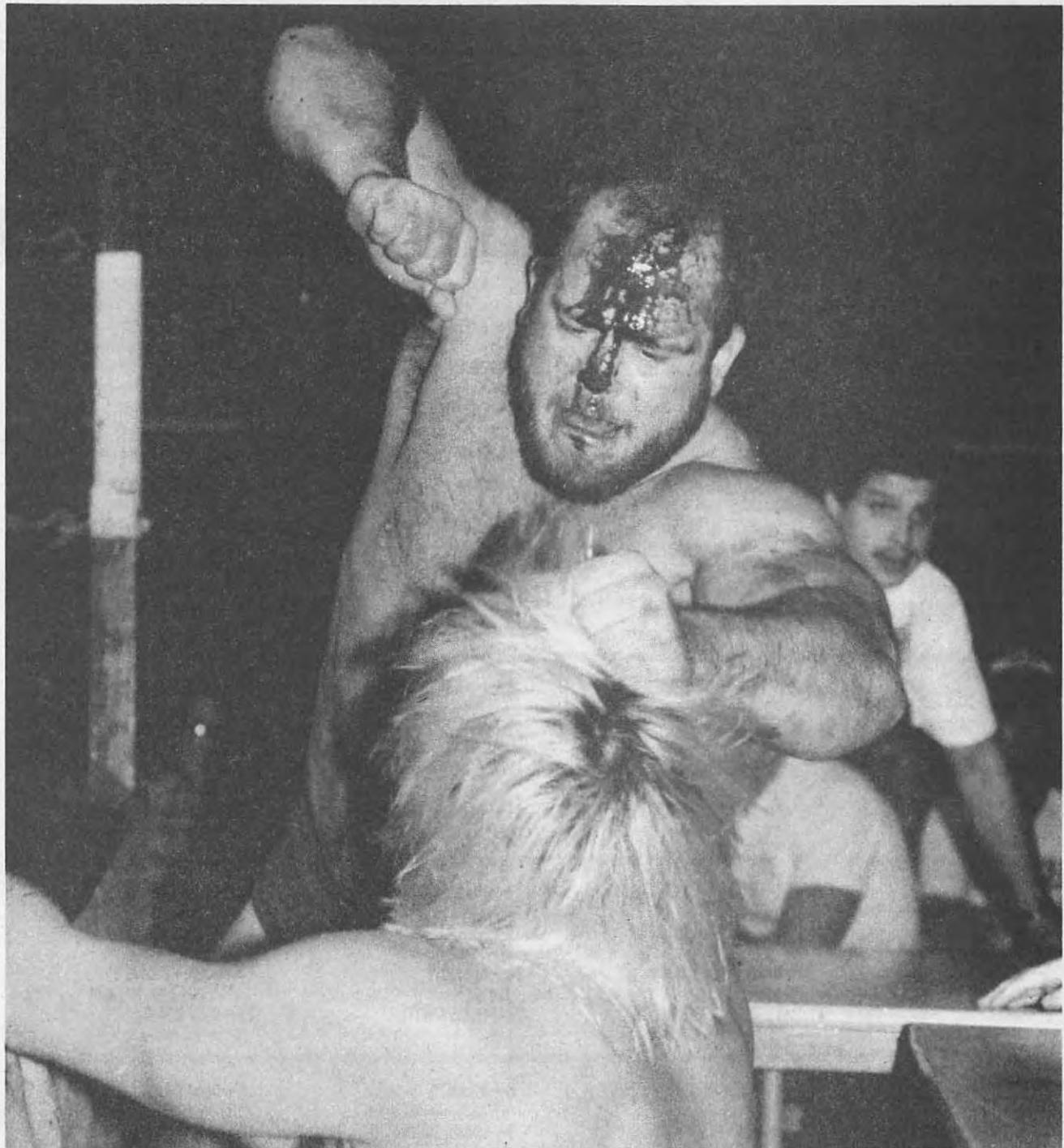
Sonny King blames the situation on the fact that neither wrestler has a manager to guide his career. "I would never let any wrestler of mine do what these two are doing. Rich and Sawyer are stagnating. Rich has fallen out of the ratings. Sawyer isn't getting anywhere. If these men had the proper management, they would not be in this situation. But it's fine with me if they want to keep on destroying each other. It just leaves more room at the top for my men."

Rich and Sawyer continue to follow each other around the country, despite the advice of their colleagues. Their most recent encounter was a cruel display of what two men can do when their hatred for one another reaches this level.

Neither man bothered to wait for the opening bell. Both ran from their dressing rooms into the ring



Sawyer forces blood to spurt out of Rich's head by applying a headlock. The winner of the matches between these two is ultimately the man who spills the least blood.



After the first few minutes of the match, winning and losing became secondary to how much punishment the wrestlers could inflict. Both wrestlers were disqualified when the battle spilled to the arena floor.

and attacked simultaneously. They flailed away at each other with sizzling punches and devastating kicks. The blood started to flow soon after, but even with their sight impaired, these archenemies refused to let up.

Sawyer attempted a pin early on, but it was too soon, as Rich had plenty of strength to power out.

That was the last time either wrestler would even think about winning or losing.

The bout spilled out of the ring and onto the concrete floor. The fans were horrified as each man rammed the other's head into ringposts, chairs, anything that was there. The referee began to count them out of the ring, but they

didn't care. They weren't there to win or lose, they were there to maim each other.

Neither Rich nor Sawyer heard the bell ring, signifying the end of the match. They didn't care. They fought up the aisle, back to the dressing room and probably into the street, where such matches belong in the first place. □

INSIDE WRESTLING'S OFFICIAL RATINGS

TOP 15

- 1—SHAWN MICHAELS**
(1) WWF World champion
2—DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE
(3) U.S. heavyweight champion
3—STEVE AUSTIN
(12) No. 2 contender: WWF World title

- 4—STING**
(1) No. 1 contender: WCW World title
5—HULK HOGAN
(-) No. 2 contender: WCW World title
6—THE UNDERTAKER
(5) No. 3 contender: WWF World title
7—LEX LUGER
(-) No. 4 contender: WCW World title

- 8—KANE**
(-) No. 4 contender: WWF World title
9—BRET HART
(-) No. 5 contender: WCW World title
10—OWEN HART
(4) WWF European champion
11—THE GIANT
(-) No. 6 contender: WCW World title

- 12—SHANE DOUGLAS**
(-) ECW heavyweight champion
13—ROCKY MAIVIA
(-) WWF Intercontinental champion
14—BOOKER T
(-) WCW TV champion
15—CHRIS JERICHO
(-) WCW cruiserweight champion

WCW

- 1—STING**
(1) 260, Venice Beach, CA
2—HULK HOGAN
(3) 275, Venice Beach, CA
3—DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE
(2) 260, Tampa, FL

- 4—LEX LUGER**
(5) 265, Chicago, IL
5—BRET HART
(-) 235, Calgary, Alberta
6—THE GIANT
(-) 430, parts unknown
7—BOOKER T
(6) 250, Harlem, NY

- 8—CHRIS JERICHO**
(-) 225, Vancouver, British Columbia
9—CHRIS BENOIT
(-) 218, Edmonton, Alberta
10—RIC FLAIR
(7) 243, Charlotte, NC
11—CURT HENNIG
(8) 235, Minneapolis, MN

- 12—REY MISTERIO JR.**
(15) 140, San Diego, CA
13—BILL GOLDBERG
(9) 270, Tulsa, OK
14—RICK MARTEL
(-) 236, Quebec City, Quebec
15—DEAN MALENKO
(11) 216, Tampa, FL

WWF

- 1—SHAWN MICHAELS**
(1) 234, San Antonio, TX
2—ROCKY MAIVIA
(2) 272, Pearl City, HI
3—STEVE AUSTIN
(5) 241, Dallas, TX

- 4—THE UNDERTAKER**
(4) 328, parts unknown
5—KANE
(7) 345, parts unknown
6—OWEN HART
(3) 227, Calgary, Alberta
7—KEN SHAMROCK
(8) 235, San Bernardino, CA

- 8—TAKA MICHINOKU**
(10) 169, Morioka, Japan
9—JEFF JARRETT
(11) 230, Nashville, TN
10—VADER
(12) 450, Denver, CO
11—MARC MERO
(13) 235, Buffalo, NY

- 12—CACTUS JACK**
(-) 277, Truth or Consequences, NM
13—TOM BRANDI
(-) 251, Norristown, PA
14—GOLDUST
(14) 254, Austin, TX
15—FAAROOQ
(-) 291, Perry, GA

ECW

- 1—SHANE DOUGLAS**
(1) 240, Pittsburgh, PA
2—TAZ
(2) 248, Red Hook, NY
3—SABU
(4) 225, Bombay

- 4—ROB VAN DAM**
(8) 240, Battle Creek, MI
5—TOMMY DREAMER
(6) 245, Yonkers, NY
6—THE SANDMAN
(3) 244, Philadelphia, PA
7—BAM BAM BIGLOW
(5) 368, Mt. Laurel, NJ

- 8—JUSTIN CREDIBLE**
(11) 225, Waterbury, CT
9—JERRY LYNN
(7) 214, Minneapolis, MN
10—AL SNOW
(12) 232, Lima, OH
11—CHRIS CHETTI
(15) 227, Amityville, NY

- 12—CHRIS CANDIDO**
(9) 226, Carteret, NJ
13—SPIKE DUDLEY
(13) 155, parts unknown
14—JOHN KRONUS
(-) 256, Cleveland, OH
15—BLUE MEANIE
(-) 350, Atlantic City, NJ

INTERNATIONAL

- 1—MITSUHARU MISAWA**
(2) 228, Ashikaga, Japan
2—KENSUKE SASAKI
(1) 233, Tokyo, Japan
3—SHINYA HASHIMOTO
(3) 287, Gifu, Japan

- 4—TAKA MICHINOKU**
(5) 169, Morioka, Japan
5—UNIVERSO 2000
(-) 215, parts unknown
6—PERRO AGUAYO
(6) 215, Zacatecas, Mexico
7—KEIJI MUTO
(7) 245, Yamaguchi, Japan

- 8—ATLANTIS**
(9) 180, Guadalajara, Mexico
9—FRANZ SCHUMANN
(12) 201, Graz, Austria
10—GREAT SASUKE
(8) 212, Morioka, Japan
11—KONNAN
(4) 237, Mexico City, Mexico

- 12—DUKE DROSE**
(10) 306, Chicago, IL
13—MASATO TANAKA
(11) 235, Tokyo, Japan
14—JUSHIN LIGER
(13) 206, Hiroshima, Japan
15—GENICHIRO TENRYU
(15) 235, Fukui, Japan

TOP 15 TAG TEAMS

- 1—SCOTT HALL & KEVIN NASH**
(-) WCW World tag team champions
2—BILLY GUNN & JESSE JAMES
(1) WWF World tag team champions
3—RICK & SCOTT STEINER
(2) No. 1 contenders: WCW World tag title
4—CHRIS CANDIDO & LANCE STORM
(3) ECW tag team champions
5—THE ROAD WARRIORS
(10) No. 1 contenders: WWF World tag title

- 6—MASA CHONO & KEIJI MUTO**
(5) IWGP tag team champions
7—OWEN HART & KEN SHAMROCK
(8) No. 2 contenders: WWF World tag title
8—HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY & SHAWN MICHAELS
(-) No. 3 contenders: WWF World tag title
9—HENRY & PHINEAS GODWINN
(12) No. 4 contenders: WWF World tag title
10—THE BARBARIAN & MENG
(6) No. 2 contenders: WCW World tag title

- 11—CACTUS JACK & CHAINSAW CHARLIE**
(-) No. 5 contenders: WWF World tag title
12—THE HEADBANGERS
(14) No. 6 contenders: WWF World tag title
13—BUH BUH RAY & D-VON DUDLEY
(15) No. 1 contenders: ECW tag title
14—MARCUS BAGWELL & KONNAN
(-) No. 3 contenders: WCW World tag title
15—THE ROCK 'N' ROLL EXPRESS
(-) NWA tag team champions

These ratings are compiled by the editors with the assistance of promoters, wrestlers, and reporters around the country, and are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and the inherent skill of each wrestler. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue ... Championships highlighted in bold on the "Roll Call Of Champions" have changed hands since our previous issue ... The information under the championship listing indicates the date that champion won the title, who the former champion was, and where the match took place.

For period ended January 25, 1998

ROLL CALL OF CHAMPIONS

ALL-JAPAN INTERNATIONAL CHAMPION: MITSUHARU MISAWA
(January 20, 1997; from Kenta Kobashi; Osaka, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN INTERNATIONAL TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:

TOSHIAKI KAWADA & AKIRA TAUÉ
(January 25, 1998; from Johnny Ace & Kenta Kobashi; Yokohama, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN UNITED NATIONAL CHAMPION: MITSUHARU MISAWA
(January 20, 1997; from Kenta Kobashi; Osaka, Japan)

AMERICAN INDEPENDENT WRESTLING FEDERATION HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:
CYCLONE
(October 18, 1997; from Major Havoc; Elkin, NC)

AMERICAN INDEPENDENT WRESTLING FEDERATION LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: PHANTOM III
(January 17, 1998; from Jackie Anderson; Bassett, VA)

AMERICAN INDEPENDENT WRESTLING FEDERATION TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:
IRON HORSE & E.Z. RYDER
(October 18, 1997; from Don Carson & Rick Deezel; Elkin, NC)

AMERICAN INDEPENDENT WRESTLING FEDERATION U.S. CHAMPION: JOHNNY REB
(January 3, 1998; from Brian Danzig; Elkin, NC)

CENTURY WRESTLING ALLIANCE HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: ERICH SBRACCIA
(January 24, 1998; beat Vic Steamboat in tournament final; Ridgefield, CT)

CENTURY WRESTLING ALLIANCE CRUISERWEIGHT CHAMPION: MILLENNIUM
(October 18, 1997; from Joel Davis; Lawrence, MA)

ECW HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: SHANE DOUGLAS
(November 30, 1997; from Bam Bam Bigelow; Monaca, PA)

ECW TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: CHRIS CANDIDO & LANCE STORM
(December 6, 1997; from Doug Furnas & Phil Lafon; Philadelphia, PA)

ECW TELEVISION CHAMPION: TAZ
(June 7, 1997; from Shane Douglas; Philadelphia, PA)

GREAT AMERICAN WRESTLING FEDERATION HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:
TERMINATOR REX
(January 17, 1998; beat Chris Cannon; Red Oak, NC)

INT'L PRO WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: KING KONG BUNDY
(December 5, 1997; from Brick Bronsky; Jim Thorpe, PA)

IWGP HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: KENSUKE SASAKI
(August 31, 1997; from Shinya Hashimoto; Yokohama, Japan)

IWGP INTERNATIONAL TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: MASA CHONO & KEIJI MUTO
(October 19, 1997; from Kensuke Sasaki & Kazuo Yamazaki; Kobe, Japan)

MUSIC CITY WRESTLING NORTH AMERICAN CHAMPION: WOLFIE D
(January 10, 1998; from Terry Golden; Nashville, TN)

MUSIC CITY WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: SHANE EDEN & THRILLBILLY
(November 27, 1997; from The Centerfolds; Nashville, TN)

PACIFIC WRESTLING FEDERATION HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: MITSUHARU MISAWA
(January 20, 1997; from Kenta Kobashi; Osaka, Japan)

PACIFIC WRESTLING FEDERATION JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:
MAUNAKEA MOSSMAN
(August 22, 1997; from Yoshinari Ogawa; Tokyo, Japan)

PACIFIC WRESTLING FEDERATION TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:
TOSHIAKI KAWADA & AKIRA TAUÉ
(January 25, 1998; from Johnny Ace & Kenta Kobashi; Yokohama, Japan)

PENNSYLVANIA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:
TIGER KHAN
(November 21, 1997; from Cheetah Master; Reading, PA)

PENNSYLVANIA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:
RECKLESS YOUTH
(November 21, 1997; from Mike Quackenbush; Reading, PA)

PENNSYLVANIA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:
BLUE THUNDER & J.R. RYDER
(January 16, 1998; from The Persian Prince & Dave Patera; Reading, PA)

PRO WRESTLING FEDERATION HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: RIPPER
(December 6, 1997; from Italian Stallion; Kings Mountain, NC)

PRO WRESTLING FEDERATION JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:
KRUSH
(January 18, 1998; from Cruel Connection II; Mooresville, NC)

PRO WRESTLING FEDERATION TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:
GEORGE SOUTH & ITALIAN STALLION
(December 6, 1997; from Chris Hamrick & Ripper; Kings Mountain, NC)

WCW CRUISERWEIGHT CHAMPION: CHRIS JERICHO
(January 24, 1998; from Rey Misterio Jr.; Dayton, OH)

WCW TELEVISION CHAMPION: BOOKER T
(December 29, 1997; from Disco Inferno; Baltimore, MD)

WCW U.S. CHAMPION: DALLAS PAGE
(December 28, 1997; from Curt Hennig; Washington, D.C.)

WCW WORLD CHAMPION: TITLE VACANT
(Most recently held by Sting)

WCW WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:
SCOTT HALL & KEVIN NASH
(January 12, 1998; from Rick & Scott Steiner; Jacksonville, FL)

WWF EUROPEAN CHAMPION: OWEN HART
(January 20, 1998; beat Goldust; Davis, CA)

WWF INTERCONTINENTAL CHAMPION: ROCKY MAIVIA
(December 8, 1997; by forfeit from Steve Austin; Portland, ME)

WWF LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: TAKA MICHINOKU
(December 7, 1997; beat Brian Christopher in tournament final; Springfield, MA)

WWF WORLD CHAMPION: SHAWN MICHAELS
(November 9, 1997; from Bret Hart; Montreal, Quebec)

WWF WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: BILLY GUNN & JESSE JAMES
(November 24, 1997; from The Road Warriors; Fayetteville, NC)

BLAST FROM THE PAST

This Month In Wrestling History

"A PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS"

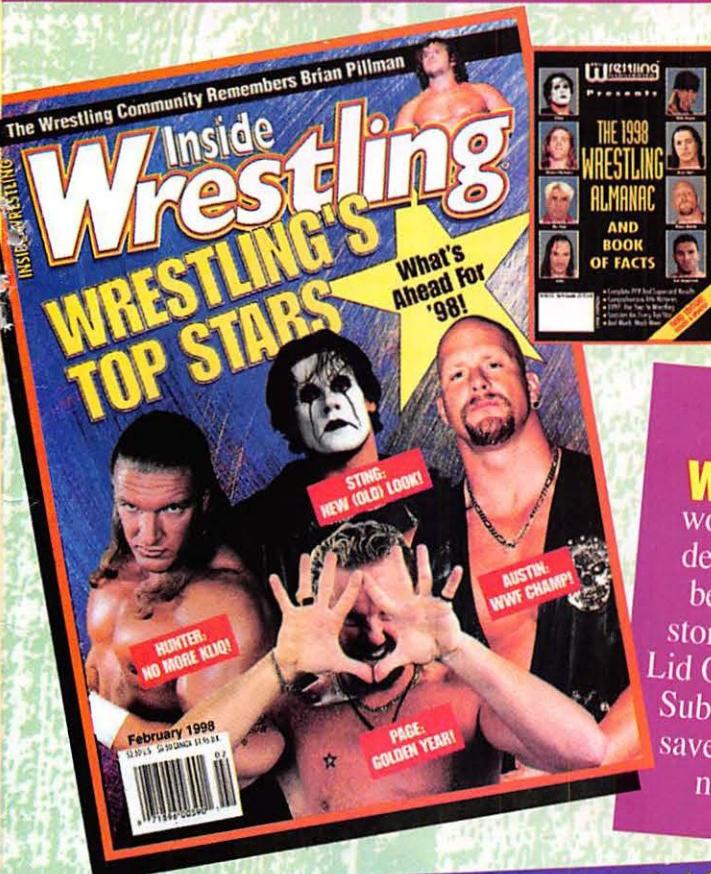


PENNY BANNER vs. NELL STEWART

May 1963

Wonder what was going through Penny Banner's head when this photo was taken? We mean *besides* Nell Stewart's knee. Stewart appears more interested in ripping Banner's head off than in getting inside of it. Moments after this shot was taken, Stewart—managed by Leo "The Lion" Newman—was crowned Texas girls' champion. Talk about a deadly finishing maneuver. We'd put Stewart's right thigh up against Scott Hall's "Outsiders' Edge" anytime.

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